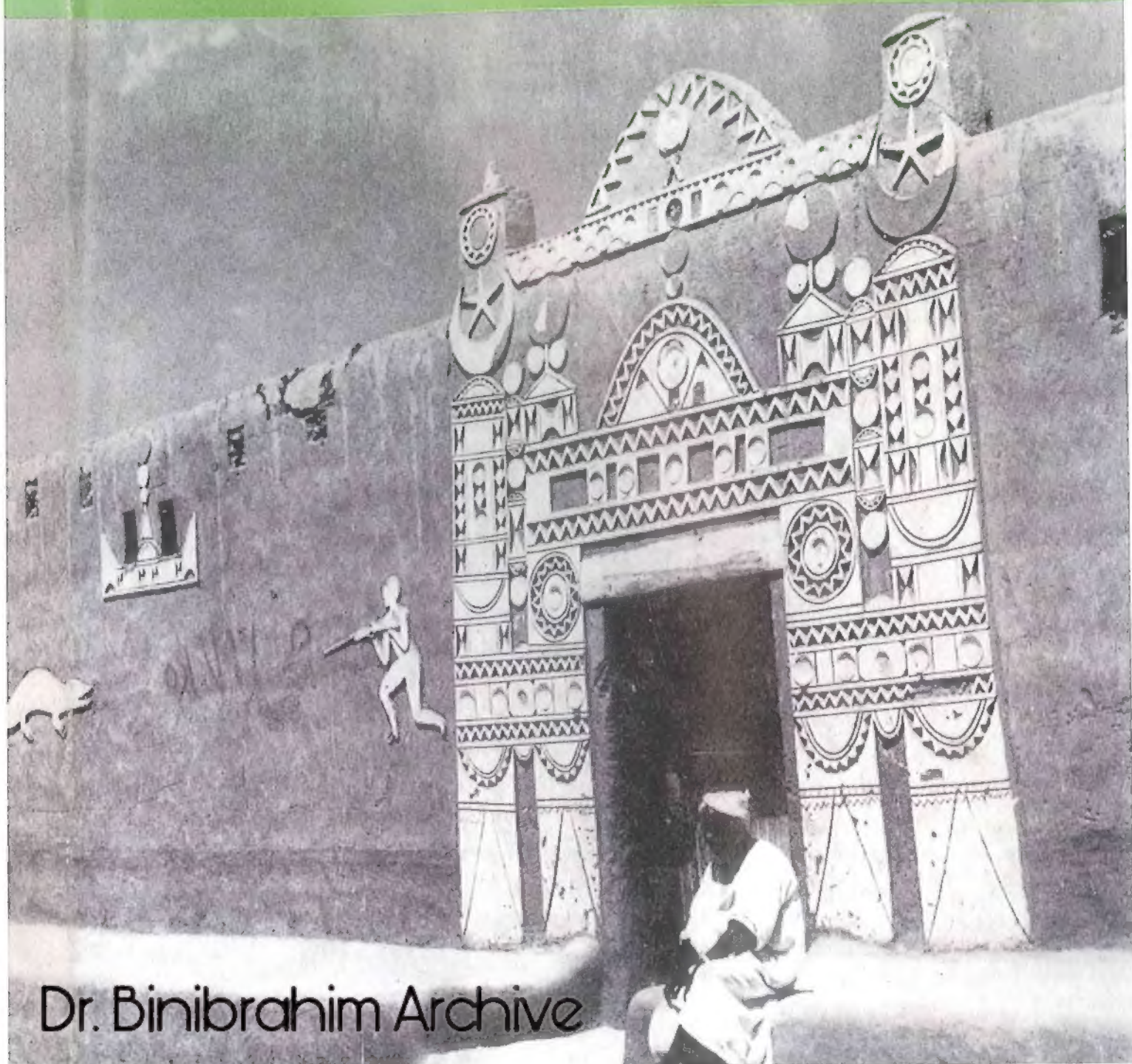


# THE NUBIAN EXODUS

*Hassan Dafalla*

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النوبيين

حسن دفع الله



Dr. Binibrahim Archive

When Egypt decided to build the High Dam at Aswan, the world's attention was attracted by the wonderful scheme, its design, its volume, its cost and its benefit to Egypt; its political side-effects included the nationalisation of the Suez Canal and the Anglo-French invasion of 1956. How the building of the Dam affected Nubia, except as regards the archaeological remains, passed nearly unnoticed. However, the reservoir lake, which was created upstream from the Dam, flooded the whole of Egyptian Nubia and a stretch of 150 km. inside the Sudan. In the Sudan alone, twenty-seven villages and the town of Wadi Halfa were swallowed by the rising waters. About 50,000 Sudanese Nubians were made homeless and all their land, their houses, their date trees and their economic assets were lost under the High Dam lake.

The decision to evacuate Sudanese Nubia was taken in 1959; the actual evacuation took place in 1963. Between those dates the Sudanese Government had a massive psychological and logistical task. It was necessary to move the entire Nubian population from its ancestral home, where a very distinct pattern of life had evolved, to a new home, which had to be selected from among various alternatives. Compensation for immovable property—most notably the date palms which had been the staple of the Nubian economy—had to be worked out. The site for the Nubians' new home, once chosen, had to be prepared—villages laid out, houses built, suitable farming and irrigation methods established. A method of physically transporting the population also had to be devised and, in order to save Wadi Halfa's famous river boats, the unprecedented step was taken of sailing them over the Nile Cataracts which separated Wadi Halfa from Khartoum. The salvaging and recording of Nubia's abundant archaeological treasures was beyond the internal resources of the Sudan, and more than twenty expeditions to the area from different countries were organised.

*[continued on back flap]*



*continued from front flap]*

Hassan Dafalla, a career civil servant, was placed by his Government in charge of this unique and historic operation. He lived with the Halfa people through the six most crucial years in their history and, although not a Nubian himself, he came to know the people with a degree of intimacy which can only grow up under such exceptional conditions.

His book is divided into two main sections. The first describes the lost Nubian country, its villages and the main town of Wadi Halfa. It also tells of the Nubians' way of life, their traditions, ecology and land economy. This section is based on notes made by the author during his stay in Wadi Halfa, and as such contains first-hand information of great value. The second section deals with the emigration itself, with all its intricate human and physical problems, up to the safe evacuation of the inhabitants to their new home as their country was about to be devastated by the rising waters; and how the arid Butana plain at Khashm el Girba was developed into one of the best-planned modern resettlement areas in Africa.

The author kept copies of his monthly reports to the commission in Khartoum about the state of affairs in Halfa, and of the minutes of all important meetings held in Khartoum and Wadi Halfa. In addition he kept a private diary. The result is a historical document of outstanding importance, recording a human achievement on which the author's compatriots can look back with pride.

HASSAN DAFALLA graduated from the Faculty of Arts at Khartoum University College in 1946, and from the School of Administration in Khartoum as a junior administrative officer in 1947. He served in Upper Nile till 1951, when he was transferred to Blue Nile and promoted District Commissioner. Returning to Upper Nile, he served in Nuer country for 4½ years, until transferred to Wadi Halfa. In 1965 he was promoted Governor, and served in that capacity in Bahr el Ghazal and Kassala provinces. He died in May 1974, aged fifty.

*Printed in Great Britain*



The Author



# THE NUBIAN EXODUS

BY  
HASSAN DAFALLA



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*in association with the  
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TO  
THE NUBIANS  
with whom I lived for six years over the crucial period of  
their emigration and resettlement  
AND TO THEIR FUTURE GENERATIONS  
I dedicate this book

*Hassan Dafalla*



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## FOREWORD

There is a long tradition of literary activity by men who have been administrators in the Sudan, from *The Journals of Major-General C. G. Gordon at Kartoum* onwards. Slatin, Wingate, MacMichael, Henderson, Davies, Jackson, Duncan, Gaitskell have all contributed to this corpus. The works range from pure memoirs, often nostalgic in tone, through others which mix autobiography with more objective reports and observations, to important academic studies. The standard has been high — each has been informative, and a good example of its kind. Hassan Dafalla will add distinction to this tradition with a book of singular quality.

It is not that the Sudanese themselves have been keeping silent all this time; they have of course been writing in Arabic. The English reader recently had a glimpse of the riches to be found in Sudanese autobiographical writing, when the first volume of Babikr Bedri's *Ta'rikh Hayate* was published in English translation. And Sudanese have published highly rated academic studies in English — among them Mekki Shibeika, Mekki Abbas, Yusuf Fadl Hasan, Mohamed Omer Beshir, Muddathir Abd el-Rahim, Saad el-Din Fawzi, Zaki Mustafa, Francis Deng — as well as books by able journalists such as Bashir Mohamed Said and novelists like Tayyib Salih.

But Hassan Dafalla gives us something which is quite new. As an administrator he is not, here, looking back on a life-time career of pleasure and interest; on the contrary he is devoting a whole book to a daunting administrative problem to which he suddenly found himself devoting all his powers and all his hours, over a period of years. The book is about how he solved this problem, or served this sentence, as an incredulous non-administrator might see it. He kept his cool and got it done. But in the meantime he had to evacuate a population of 50,000; to compensate them for their lost land and trees; to cope with opposition to the move; to deal with situations that arose when politicians didn't follow his advice. He had to move fragile ships up cataracts; to entertain foreign royalty; to sort out the problems of twenty-two archaeological expeditions; to co-ordinate the movements of fifty-five trains; to make suitable arrangements for childbirth on them; to exhume the body of Uthman Digna. He also did something that was not essential — he kept a diary.



The sources for his book were his diary and the official papers. The diary must have been an unusual one. The narrative gives not only a lucid account of the administrative decisions taken, but also a remarkable picture of the impressions and the impact which Nubia made upon a civil servant from another part of the Sudan. Hassan's eyes are everywhere, finding delight in the local ways of the Nubians. The Nubians are partly strangers to him, but partly also they are people who share in many respects the wider culture of the Northern Sudan, so that his knowledge of what is common is enhanced here by his understanding and his sympathy with what is strange; and the observations and reactions are those of a highly enlightened liberal administrator — who slips a shroud into the hand of the official in charge of the trains in case someone should die on the way to the resettlement area; who doesn't worry if the villagers spend hours saying farewell to their ancestors at the time of their train's departure; who takes time out to go and see what a village is like when no one is left in it; who records with his camera the collapse of the homes of men in the rising flood; whose compassion for those caught in the tragedy of moving from an ancient home is evident throughout and whose gentle sense of humour enlivens the story.

There had been continual occupation of the affected villages for hundreds of years by the ancestors of the present population. The trauma of movement was great — all the more so, in that these Nubians had a unique, isolated way of life in an extraordinary country, and were moving to an area and to houses which in comparison were standard and ordinary. Now they had no Nile River; no labour-saving forests of date palms; no longer were they the guardians of ancient monuments on their doorsteps. Nevertheless the population of Wadi Halfa and the district accepted, in the long run, the *force-majeure* sacrifice for the motherland in the migration which they undertook (and Hassan Dafalla has merely hinted at a growing feeling that the whole exercise might not represent an absolute gain for their Egyptian friends, who have more usable water but no Nile silt). But at least at Khashm el Girba there is a new dam and irrigated agriculture where there was desert. And maybe the Sudan will build a new community round the High Dam Lake once it attains its final level and finds new natural resources. But in the end Hassan Dafalla's compelling narrative raises implacable questions about loss and gain.

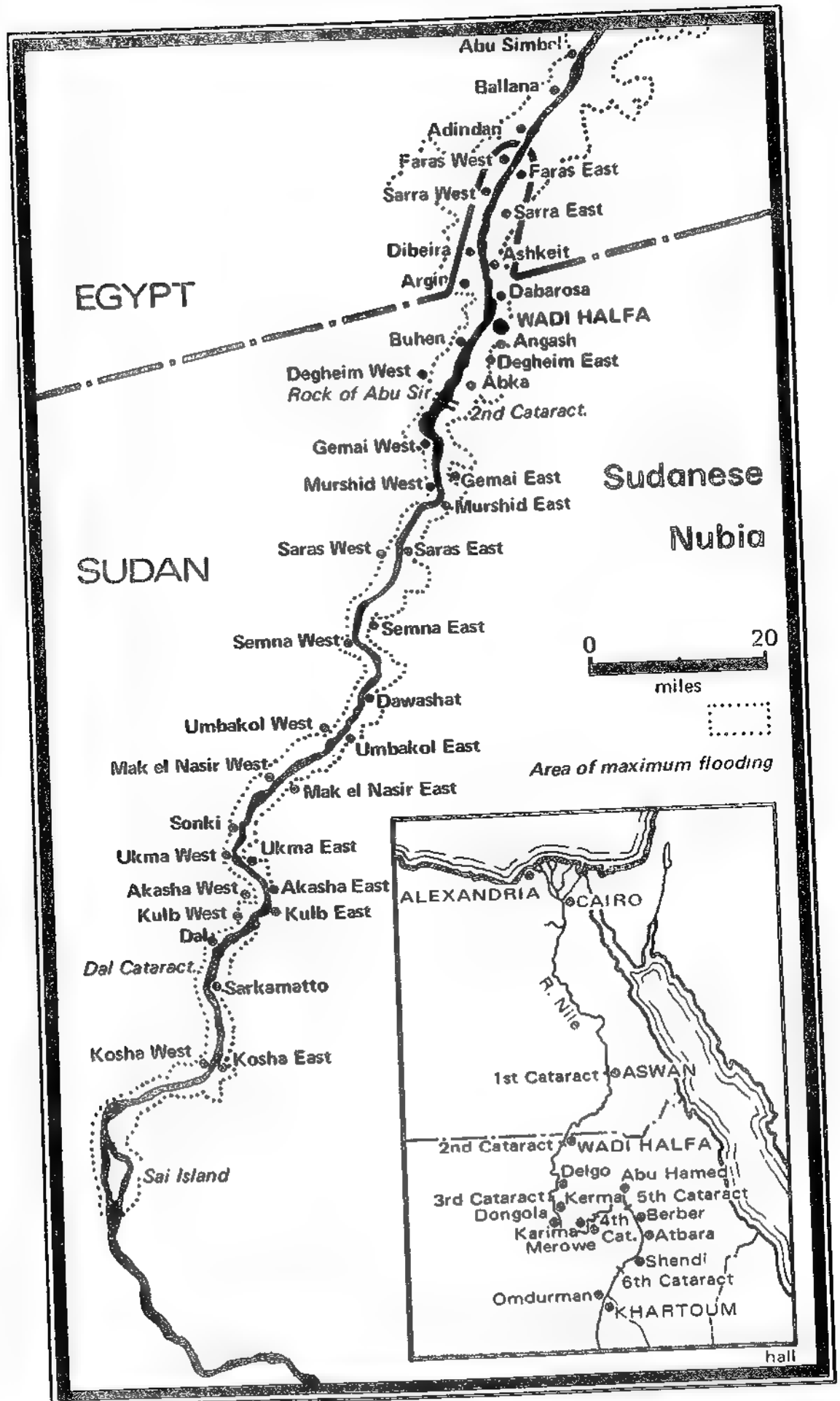
This book gave me, personally, great enjoyment, and it left me with the clear opinion that if the sort of operation he describes *has* to take place, then Hassan Dafalla or someone very like him is a suitable person to be in charge. Administrators of other, similar schemes, please take note of what he did and how he did it. As for the literary product, one

has simply to admire this combination of the tolerant, humanistic and practical man with the writer who has put forth in a style at once so clear and so engaging the detailed narrative of a complex executive task.

IAN CUNNISON

*Postscript*

Hassan Dafalla has not lived to see his book in print. He died in May 1974 at the age of fifty.





## PREFACE

When Egypt decided to build the High Dam at Aswan, the world's attention was attracted by the wonderful scheme, its design, its scale, its cost and its benefits to Egypt; but its evil aspects for Nubia passed unnoticed. The reservoir lake which was created upstream from the Dam disastrously affected all Egyptian Nubia and a reach of 150 km inside the Sudan. In the Sudan alone, twenty-seven villages and the town of Wadi Halfa were swallowed up by the rising waters of the lake. About 50,000 Sudanese Nubians were made homeless, and all their land, their houses, their date trees and economic assets were lost under the lake. In Egypt the number of Nubians affected was estimated at 70,000, making an overall total of 120,000 souls.

The story related in this book concerns the Sudanese Nubians who inhabited the Northern part of Wadi Halfa District. It gives an account of the liquidation of their immovable property, and their emigration and resettlement in their new home at Khashm el Girba. Being the commissioner in charge of Wadi Halfa, and later for the emigration, I lived with the Halfa people for six years, during which I attended the sad fate of their country and the building of their resettlement area. The whole issue of the emigration with all its aspects, physical and emotional, fell heavily on my shoulders. Having no precedent to follow, I had to rely on my imagination and the state of morale of the inhabitants. The fact that I lived with them for so long and got to know them so well helped me greatly in assessing the different situations and determining the issues and the courses of action to be followed.

The first part of the book describes the lost Nubian country, its villages and the main town of Wadi Halfa. It also tells something of the Nubians, their way of life, their traditions, ecology and land economy. I compiled these notes during my stay in Wadi Halfa, and I believe they contain first-hand information about lost Nubia which will be of value. The second part deals with the emigration and all its intricate problems, human and physical, up to the safe evacuation of the inhabitants to their new home before their country was devastated by the rising waters of the High Dam lake. How the Butana plain at Khashm el Girba was developed from nothing to become one of the best-planned modern resettlement areas in Africa is also discussed in detail.

The material for this section was carefully collected during my

service as Commissioner for Emigration. I kept copies of the monthly reports I sent to the commission in Khartoum about the state of affairs in Halfa, and of the minutes of all important meetings held in Khartoum and Wadi Halfa. In addition, I had a complete set of all census reports and social surveys carried out in the affected area and, last but not least, my private diary.

Taking into consideration the short time lapse specified by the Nile Agreement for the execution of the resettlement plans and the evacuation of the Halfa people, and the high standards and efficiency with which both schemes were carried out, the whole operation was a credit to the administration of Abboud. It was due to the great efforts of co-operation of the civil service with the Government that the good planning and development of such a great scheme came to reality. I do not need to give any examples here, as the reader will find them in the narrative, but suffice it to mention that within the span of only three years a complete dam with all its canalisation was constructed; all the villages and the town of New Halfa were planned and built to a standard second to none in the Sudan; at old Halfa all immovable property was liquidated; and the whole population were safely transferred to their new home with all their movable belongings before the water overflowed the banks of the Nile in 1964.

My thanks are due to Professor I. Cunnison at whose suggestion and encouragement while he was serving in the University of Khartoum I wrote this book, and who later on helped me in editing the manuscript in the University of Hull. I also thank Professor F. Rehfish for reading the manuscript and giving me very useful suggestions. I am indebted to Dr Yusuf Fadl Hasan and Dr M. C. Jedrej of the University of Khartoum for the interest they showed in reading the manuscript, and for their contact with the British Council Representative in Khartoum, Mr. M. S. Dalziel, who recommended me for the award which made possible the editing and final preparation of this book; and to the Editor of *Sudan Notes and Records* for permission to reproduce parts of Chapters 4 and 7, which have appeared in that publication. To all of these I owe a heavy debt of gratitude.

H. DAFALLA

PART I

BACKGROUND



1. View of Wadi Halfa

## MY ARRIVAL IN WADI HALFA

On 17 August 1958, while I was on leave, I received instructions from the Ministry of the Interior to proceed to Wadi Halfa, on transfer from my former Zeraf District in Upper Nile province. The instructions had embodied clear directions that I had to suspend the remaining weeks of my vacation and fly by the first plane from Khartoum to Wadi Halfa to take over the District Administration from my colleague Sayed Abd el Sami Ghandur who was to go on transfer to Equatoria province.

On 21 August I took the Sudan Airways Dakota and was soon flying north over the cloudy sky of Khartoum. The route followed the Nile down to Karima, and the flight until then was comfortable and interesting. The sight of the Nile and small towns and villages along its course, and the green vegetation that embraced the two banks of the river, was very refreshing. When we passed over Karima the whole scene changed. The craft glided in the blue space over the Nubian desert and the panorama underneath was a great barren immensity and a huge boundless waste of sand plain, dotted with rocky hills, stretching in every direction to infinity. There was nothing alive in that limitless harsh region of solitude and no movement could be seen, except for the shadow of our plane as it followed us steadily underneath. After seventy minutes of a monotonous and by no means easy flight over this extensive wilderness I caught sight of a green thread stretching its way through that great Sahara, half-way to the horizon. The sight was a relief, and the silver glitter gleaming and flashing at a distance convinced me that we were approaching the Nile again, and that my journey was coming to a close. After a few moments the wheels of the Dakota were lowered and we were soon on the runway.

When the plane stopped, I was the first passenger on the steps. I could see a host of officials and notables waiting to meet me in front of the airport building. Abd el Sami Ghandur (the District Commissioner whom I was succeeding), his tall, slim figure towering high, and Mukhtar el Tom, the town clerk, hurried forward. After a warm reception and cheerful remarks, Abd el Sami introduced the other gentlemen. They formed an impressive gathering, and I developed

strong ties of friendship with them during my stay in Halfa. Among them were Salih Isa Abdu, the *nazir* of the northern region of the district, a stout man with a sincere smiling face, Ahmed Sherif Daud and Mirghani Ali Ibrahim, the chairman of the council.

The aerodrome was in the middle of a level plain of coarse white sand and surrounded by low brown stony hills, marked by steep cliffs and shallow cavities filled with sand-drift blown by the strong winter winds.

The sun was already nearing its zenith when we landed and the weather was as hot as usual in August in that part of the Sudan. The unrelenting sun, pouring its hot rays on to the glaring carpet of white sand, caused deceptive mirages which covered the whole landscape with mocking illusions and obscure perceptions, showing a clear reflection of all objects in that glassy sheet of false water. As we left the airport, the car jerked along a rough tarmac road to the town with frequent bumps and constant rattling. Evidently that road had been neglected for years.

After ten minutes' drive, as our car was nearing a sharp bend in the road, I saw the houses of Degheim extending to the river bank. One end of the village was hidden from our view by two hills, which sloped gently towards the road. These houses were built either from raw mud or unburnt bricks, and most were covered with sand plaster, which gave them a smooth appearance. Some buildings had verandahs at the front with roman arches which made them look modern, compared with the traditional fort-like structure of Nubian dwellings. The village was crossed by wide roads, connected by narrow lanes, which were covered with drifts of sand. The roads were characteristically clean and free of rubbish. The water tank, which was the most dominant feature of that part of Degheim, stood high on grey-painted columns. There was hardly a soul to be seen at that hot time of day, and everything seemed deathly silent. The complete absence of trees and vegetation gave the impression that the entire village was deserted. Far in the background a thick line of date palms marked the course of the Nile and hid the main stream with the graceful curves of their hanging branches. Further away, on the west bank, there was a low range of flat-topped hills and sand dunes sloping towards the river with nothing remarkable except for the white buildings of Professor Emery's rest-house overlooking the remains of the ancient city of Buhen, beyond the green trees at the river bank.

When the car turned right, the rest of the village was revealed to us and the road ran through its midst. The most prominent building was the magnificent mosque built on a conspicuous site in the middle of an open space. Its elegant minaret projected high in the sky. This mosque



had been built by the deposed King Farouk of Egypt, as a political gesture, when the future of the Sudan was swinging between independence and union with Egypt. Adjacent to the mosque were the school premises with their domed entrance halls. At the corner of the open square and near the road was a rest-house built of mud which was used by passengers waiting for the train to Khartoum. When we passed that quiet village we suddenly came across the green field of Charlie Rashid, a Sudanese Syrian whose father had joined Kitchener's campaign as a doctor. There were small thatched huts erected near the cultivation occupied by Saidi workers, which showed that Rashid's labour roll did not include Nubians. Opposite the pump scheme and on the right side of the road were a few wretched slum houses, all crowded together, with coloured rags stuck to bamboo masts flapping in the wind, advertising that they were *marisa* (local beer) shops. That quarter was known as Deim Jackson, so evidently it had been planned by Mr H. C. Jackson who was Governor of Halfa Province in the late 1920s. Behind it, in contrast, stood the only village in Degheim, which belonged to a Nubian official called Mahmoud Ali Idris. The main canal of Rashid's scheme crossed the road a few yards beyond Deim Jackson and marked the southern boundary of Wadi Halfa town.

After a short drive and a turn to the left I found that we were in the best developed area in the town. The two-storey house of the District Commissioner with its encircling verandah and decorated parapet could be seen from a distance. It had been built in the early 1920s with its back to the river and had an extensive garden with rose bushes imported from England. In front of the main gate stood two old Krupp cannons, relics of Kitchener's campaign. Adjacent to this house in the open space to the south was an old-fashioned mosque of mud bricks covered with lime wash. It had no minaret but the traditional dome with glass windows in the middle of the roof; the muezzin had to stand on a timber pulpit on the corner of the roof when he wished to call for prayers. This mosque had been built by Khedive Ismail Pasha of Egypt in the 1870s, and bore his name. West of the mosque, on the river bank, and closing the gap between the District Commissioner's house and the Nile Hotel, were three houses occupied by senior officials. The Nile Hotel was built at the road terminus south of the mosque and covered a large area. It was two-storeyed, and the finest building in the whole town; its central block contained lounges and reception rooms, and in the two wings were some twenty rooms, well furnished and spotlessly clean. The front view was shaded with verandahs that opened to terraces on the ground floor, and the first floor had open balconies overlooking a beautiful garden covering the whole area to the river foreshore. In winter, with the beginning of the tourist season, a corridor



2. The Nile Hotel, Wadi Halfa

at the back, leading to the dining room, turned into a small bazaar where ivory, silver, ostrich feathers and other Sudanese souvenir articles were sold. On the river bank the s.s. *Sudan*, a steamer once belonging to Thomas Cook and Son, remained permanently moored, and was used as an annexe to the main hotel.

Following the river bank north from the District Commissioner's house, next door were the celebrated old premises of the *Sirdaria*, consisting of some twelve rooms, built almost in one line with a long verandah from end to end. The first room at the south end was used by General Gordon, and later converted into a residence occupied by Kitchener Pasha during the preparation period prior to the reconquest of the Sudan. It was because Kitchener was then *Sirdar* of the Egyptian army that the building acquired its name; a marble memorial placed at one side of the entrance to the room recorded the fact. The premises were kept in good condition and were occupied by International Airlines staff when I arrived; later they were allotted to officials of the civil aviation department.

The District Commissioner's house and the *Sirdaria* were near the noisy railway workshops, where there were large steel sheds for the maintenance and oiling of all trains leaving for Khartoum. The

workshop area was covered with black cinders, railway lines, coal yards and oil tanks, and crowded with workers in their oily uniforms. The never-ending clang of the smithing iron, the beating of heavy hammers at short regular intervals, the whizz of steam and the puffing and clatter of shunting engines and waggons being coupled and uncoupled, made a constant disturbance. The electric siren blown at official breaks in the working day added to the din of the area. The main shunting line crossed the road straight in front of the District Commissioner's gate, and the railway authorities did not forget to place two alarm signs saying 'whistle' beside the road, at which attentive locomotive drivers used to release steam through the engine flute, causing one of the most irritating sounds ever heard. My children interpreted this never-failing habit as the courteous salute of the train drivers to their nerve-racked father. On the foreshore behind these workshops was a spacious dockyard for the regular refitting of the steamers serving on the Shellal route. The yard contained two docks. The bigger one was a steel floating steamer carrier, and the other was a sliding concrete slab, on a slope from the bank to the river bed, with rail wheels and big pulleys connected to strong wire ropes, used for pulling ashore steamers and barges when hull repairs were needed. Two giant mobile cranes resting on the railway line hung over the concrete dock for loading and unloading consignments of high tonnage. There was always more than one boat being attended to at this busy yard, and I could see three steamers lying at anchor awaiting their turn. All the steamers working on that reach had cosmological names – *El Thoraya* (Pleiades), *El Mirriekh* (Mars), *Lotus* (sun), *El Gamar* (moon) and many others. The only exception was a strong tug called *El Nuba*, seized from the Italians in the Mediterranean during the Second World War, and floated upstream to Wadi Halfa. At the corner of the dockyard, beside the road, was a fine two-storeyed building which contained the offices of the dockyard manager and his staff. It had been erected during the years of preparation for the reconquest of the Sudan and used then as a military hospital. On the east side of the road beside the dockyard stood a line of conical-roofed stone huts, representing the traditional type of railway workers' dwellings, and some railway staff bungalows. A grove of palm trees shaded these quarters; they had in fact been planted by the Mahdist captives detained in exile in Wadi Halfa.

These were my new surroundings. My first impression was that my transfer had brought about a great change in my life. I had moved from a secluded house and a small society in Fanjak to live in the middle of El Geiger railway and industrial area with all its noise. I had also come from tropical, swampy country with heavy rains to the rainless desert.

When I entered the house it was completely empty. Abd el Sami told



3. Date-palm avenue, Wadi Halfa

me that he himself was so keen to leave that he had sent all his baggage and family ahead of him. I had a quick look into the rooms and was pleased to find them very spacious after my small residence in Fanjak. The children's nursery fascinated me with its paintings of characters like Mickey Mouse and a group of bears in fancy dress singing and playing music. I understood that those paintings were the work of the wife of one of the British District Commissioners. The ground floor was so roomy and commodious that all my predecessors had been able to dispense with the first floor; in this I was not an exception. To a man like me who had spent four-and-a-half years living in the jungle of Upper Nile, it was a novelty to find the town equipped with electricity and a water supply.

From there we proceeded to the office. Passing the dockyard offices we came to a small open space stretching between a small cathedral on one side and the power house and the prison building on the other. Two idle warders were sitting in front of the prison gate while seven unfortunate convicts were eating their meal in the prison yard behind the barred gate. Then we struck the best avenue in the town which had also been the first of its kind in the country. For half a mile the tarmac road was shaded with two rows of thick date-palms planted in lines straight as a ruler, and their stems had grown up side by side, perfectly upright. Their branches dangled and swayed gracefully with the breeze.

Evidently it was a good season, as could be observed from the heavy crimson and yellow clusters of dates hanging from the foliage. Later on I developed broad flower beds along the side of the road which bloomed with bright colours in winter. The avenue ended by the *merkaz* (district headquarters) building.

We then had a hurried walk and visited the departments which operated in the district H.Q. building, where I was introduced to the senior officials. The district building was semi-circular, and faced the river to the west and the palm avenue to the east. The central block contained the Commissioner's office with the clerks, surveyor and agricultural office. The south wing was used by the *mamur* (junior administrative officer), town bench (local court) and *Sharia* (Muslim law) court, and the north wing was mainly occupied by the civil court and land department. The whole building was shaded by a long corridor running from end to end. Out towards the river was the police office, with the arms and ammunition store guarded night and day by an armed sentinel. The middle space was overshadowed by old leafy trees which offered good shelter for the crowds of men and women waiting every day for decisions to be taken on their countless petitions, or who were interested in the cases scheduled for trial on a particular day. So ended the working day of my arrival and in the following couple of days we covered the rest of the departments.

## VISIT TO THE VILLAGES

On the fourth day we planned to drive north to the frontier post of Faras. When we crossed the town boundary we came upon a small village called Sheikh Ali situated at the end of the hill slope with small patches of green cultivation towards the river. At the corner of the village a small mosque with a stone minaret caught the eye. An empty space of three miles separated Sheikh Ali from Sahaba village with its mud houses straggling at the foot of Jebel Sahaba. That *jebel* was a feature of its own. It stood exactly at the spot where Latitude 22 crossed the Nile and hence it assumed political as well as survey importance. Further, its name had attracted many legends. It was said that some of the Mohammedan saints visited the locality at the dawn of Islam and tied their horses on top of the *jebel*, and so it was called the mountain of the friends of Prophet Mohammed. Moreover, the *jebel* was a spur protruding from the main mountain range that ran parallel to the river. It blocked the way to the northern sector, only allowing a space of a few yards for the motor road and railway line. Heaps of broken stone at its foot gave clear evidence that there was a quarry of building stone. From the foot of this mountain, looking west, one had a clear view of the village of Argin on the west bank, with the whitewashed buildings of the schools and dispensary, and a thick date forest lining the river. From Jebel Sahaba there were three miles of sandy waste till one reached the village of Ashkeit.

Ashkeit had a pleasing appearance, especially to a new visitor. It was one of the biggest Nubian settlements in the northern sector of the district, and was at the upstream end of the Dibeira pump scheme. The main canal started at the southern end, and ran parallel to the road to Diheira. The pumps were mounted on a barge floating at the river bank. The village was laid out on a sloping plain at the foot of a range of rocky hills extending north and south. To the west, between the village and the river, the space was covered with rotational vegetation overshadowed by scattered date palms. These became thicker and more numerous towards the river until they formed a big forest on the Nile bank.



Ashkeit was a typical Nubian village. All the houses were built in the traditional style of the Nubian architecture, and each one stood detached from its neighbours. The rooms were built against all four boundary walls, leaving a square open space in the middle. Most of the houses had scarcely any windows at all, and except for small openings left at the top of the walls just below roof level, the whole structure had a solid mud wall from foundation to roof, leaving only a big gate closed with a local timber door and locked with the traditional Nubian wooden bolt. It gave the impression of an ancient fort and reminded me of the old district prisons in the central Sudan.

The average house had an area of 400 square metres, 20 x 20 m. The gate, always in the middle of the front wall, opened on to a small hall, 3 x 4 m. To right or left down the hall was the guest room, normally the widest and best furnished room in the house. Next to it was a major bedroom opening on to the open central square. Other family rooms were built in a chain around the boundary wall; on average there were three, all facing the central open space. At the back were the kitchen and storerooms. Along the outside of the front wall a mud terrace one metre wide and half a metre high was built, rendered, like the rest of the wall of the main building, with smooth sand plaster. This terrace was used by women at weddings and on occasions of mourning.

The outstanding feature of the houses of Ashkeit was the magnificence of their decoration, which outshone the houses in all other villages. The walls of the rooms, especially the guest rooms, were decorated either in coloured lime wash designs, or with china dishes. Snail shells and coloured pebbles were also used. At times the wall plaster had reliefs of floral, faunal or geometric design, painted in colour. In some houses the shells and pebbles were either arranged to give the impression of mosaic pictures or arranged in the form of sacred writings, in most cases the great name of God. Round the white-washed walls of other houses, women artists drew all sorts of decorative drawings of date trees, human figures, animals or fruits.

There has been much speculation over the origins of the way the gates of houses were decorated. Some scholars think it was bequeathed from ancient Egyptian mythology and lost its religious significance as time went by till it became pure decoration. Others, such as Sayed Ibrahim Ahmed, believed that the gate decorations were meant to distract the evil eye from the house and its occupants.

Usually there were four lines of china saucers arranged in the form of an inverted 'M' placed exactly over the breadth of the gate lintel with two more dishes stuck over the mid-angle of the 'M', thus giving it the appearance of the dome of a tomb with two flags on either side. The average number of dishes used was about thirty. Poor people

used fewer, and at times one could see only one dish stuck over the centre of the lintel. In some houses different decorative patterns were used, taking various geometric designs. Two gates on the main road of Ashkeit were especially attractive with their rich decoration of projecting plaster lines combined with china saucers. The plaster lines were an orderly disposition of straight lines and circles arranged in a geometric design intermingled with zigzag projections. This pattern covered a width of two metres on either side of the gate, while above the lintel was a semicircle of curves and zigzag projections with a crescent and a star. These plaster projections were painted with white or coloured lime. Two skilled artisans, Hassan Orabi and Ahmed Batul, were known in the area for making these great decorations; both of them belonged to the Eleigat tribe in Egypt, but were resident in the area. They also made internal decorations, mostly in the guest rooms of the Nubian houses.\* The centre part of the village was dominated by the magnificent two-storeyed house of the Ayoub family, one of the biggest families in Ashkeit village. It was built in modern style with Roman arches, plastered with cement and washed with white lime.

A small empty sandy space separated Ashkeit from the village of Dibeira, the largest settlement in the northern part of the district. It was in fact a group of sub-villages situated near to each other and scattered between the range of hills to the east and the river bank. The central part - the original Dibeira - was at the foot of the hills and stretched down to the main road and the railway line. The beautiful large house of *nazir* Salih Isa Abdu (Salhein) was built of sandstone, with an extensive verandah and reinforced concrete roof. It was the biggest house in the neighbourhood, and occupied a block of land more than 1 feddan in area. Just north of it, two very long rows of date trees ran in parallel lines towards the west, marking the two banks of the old main canal of the Loiso pump scheme. The area between the road and the river was a level plain which was kept green throughout the year with rotational crops. Groves of date palms were scattered all over the plain, and as usual ended in a thick palm forest along the river bank. The deserted pump house of the Loiso scheme with its tall red-brick chimney could be seen beside the river.

South-west of Dibeira, El Hasa village was situated on a high gravel plain from which it seems to have derived its name. An extensive cultivable area stretched all round the village, and this was green throughout the year, but bare of any date palms. The palms belonging to

\* Much of their work has been surveyed by Ahmed Mohamed Ali el Hakim in an Occasional Paper (No. 1, 1965) published by the Sudan Unit of Khartoum University.

the village were grown in the southern vicinity near the scheme canal and by the river bank, At the north end of Dibeira one would come to Hajir village, with its houses straggling along the foot of the hills as far as the edge of the cultivation — thus they were well sheltered with date palms. North-west of Hajir were the remains of ancient Dibeira, half buried in the sand near the river bank.

All the houses of the villages of Dibeira were built in the traditional Nubian style. Most gates were decorated with china saucers, but their display was not as grand as that of Ashkeit.

A little to the north of Hajir the village of Sarra East was situated. As the Dibeira scheme terminated at Hajir, the Sarra people had to rely completely on their *sagiyas* to irrigate their land. They had a comparatively small area of cultivation and fewer date trees than the southern villages. The village, like Ashkeit and Dibeira, was on high ground at the foot of the slope and straggled down to the main road where a cluster of giant wild fig trees overshadowed its western perimeter. The houses were of the same standard as those of Hajir and Dibeira.

From Sarra to the north the road deviated eastwards and passed almost to the top of the low range of hills. The view of the Nile from that road was really striking. Except for the narrow strips of vegetation along the two banks, the dwelling houses of the Nubians, and perhaps a couple of *feluccas* gliding along in full sail, the landscape was sandy waste and Sahara hills stretching to the horizon. After a ten minutes' drive one would arrive at Faras East with its houses scattered along the slope towards the river. At its east end stood the village mosque, built of mud bricks, with a low minaret containing small arched windows which made me mistake it at first glance for a frontier observation tower. The inhabitants of the village relied entirely on their cultivation on Faras Island which lay in the middle of the river opposite the village. The island was permanently green with clusters of palm trees, and along the bank was a chain of *sagiyas* driven by oxen irrigating the green fields.

Four miles north of Faras was our boundary post, on top of a small hill with the Sudan flag flying high. It consisted of stores for arms and ammunition and two wards for our army and policemen who guarded the frontier. At the foot of that hill stood the remains of an ancient church, built half of stone and half of mud bricks. A signpost bearing the letters 'S—E' was fixed to the centre of its west wall: thus the church straddled the frontier. On the west bank a similar post was fixed in the ground 200 yards away from where we stood. Across a shallow sandy valley we could see the Egyptian boundary post, with the Egyptian flag flying over two rooms and a canvas tent. The village of

Adindan across the border could be seen in minute detail from our frontier post. It was built to the same pattern and standard as Faras, with perhaps more date trees and more cultivable land.

The west bank villages begin with Faras West in the north, which was small and the poorest of all the villages of the north sector. It had scarcely any cultivable land and its date trees were numbered. The houses were of lower standard of building and were mostly sited on sand dunes. There were no trees to screen the village from the north wind, which blew into it clouds of sand from the Sahara. A short distance west of Faras there was a land depression into which the water infiltrated from the river and accumulated in a small lagoon. Its bitter taste indicated that deposits of salt minerals existed under the village. Having no cultivation, Faras people had grown skilled in boat sailing and camel riding. Their chief occupation was transporting goods by native boats to and from Ballana on the Egyptian frontier.

South of Faras one would come to Sarra West, then Dibeira West and Aksha, all of them nearly of the same standard as Sarra East, perhaps with less cultivation and date trees. It was noticeable that the sand dunes gradually disappeared the further south one went until they vanished completely in the big village of Argin.

Argin village was one of the largest settlements in the northern sector of the district, second only to Dibeira, and the biggest on the west bank. It was a chain of three villages side by side, forming the largest rural settlement in the district. These three villages — Ashawiriki, Silados and Sharkutari — were built on a stepped rocky slope parallel to the Nile and separated from it by a belt of cultivable land irrigated either by *sagiyas* or pumps; the rows of houses lined on the slope steps get higher and higher towards the west, and so when the whole village was viewed from the east bank at Jebel Sahaba the rear houses could be clearly seen from foundation to roof. The bank of the Nile in the foreground was thickly covered with a long palm forest that stretched for nearly three miles. The Arginians used to boast of their date trees and called their village 'the bride of date palms'.

Although the Nubians in general were very courteous, yet Argin people were the most considerate. Their standard of education was the best in the northern sector and second only to Degheim village in the whole rural area of the district.

## WADI HALFA: DESCRIPTION

Halfa town was situated on the east bank of the Nile, and was built on a flat plain between a range of low mountains in the east and the river. Except for a little rise at the north end, the plain was level, and had a gentle inclination towards the river. The soil was mainly dark silt, covered with patches of soft sand. The rocky range extended from south to north, four miles from the river at the southern end, and getting closer until it was only a mile away at the northern boundary.

The residential area was divided into tribal or national sectors. The 11,000 souls who inhabited the town, and the distribution of its quarters, exhibited the diverse and heterogeneous character of the population. Thus the area north of the market up to Dabarosa was occupied by traders of Syrian and Egyptian origin, who had settled there at the close of the nineteenth century, and they were the better-off section of the community. Their houses, mostly of two storeys, occupied the entire areas of the small plots in which they were built, leaving little or no open spaces between the congested rooms. They were built of mud bricks covered with lime plaster, painted to look like stone-work. Their coloured worm-eaten joinery showed their age, and their timber balconies decorated with fretwork, overlooking the narrow lanes, gave a Turkish look to the whole area. An old-fashioned mosque, with a high minaret, built by Khedive Tawfik, occupied a commanding view of the river. This quarter was called the Tawfikia, a clear indication that it was first developed during the reign of Tawfik Pasha. The northern part of this area was dominated by an Egyptian school attached to the Coptic church, and the high building of the Local Government Council.

Halfa market was the most interesting feature of the whole town. It covered the area between the railway station and the Tawfikia. It consisted of 400 shops built in five rows running from north to south, joined by very narrow lanes. The shops were mostly of stone construction built back to back, with no arcades to shelter pedestrians or protect the occupants from the sun. Some of them, especially those facing west, were equipped with timber screens made of old boards,

fitted above the door lintels and kept hanging in a wretched condition.

Evidently, however, the market was the nucleus of all activity in the town. It abounded in buyers and sellers, as well as goods. In fact, it contained more goods than space as could be seen from the articles heaped on the floors of most shops, as well as filling the shelves to the ceilings. The Syrian drapers dealt with all kinds of textiles, from fine English wool and nylon to the calico and grey cloth used by the common folk. The Egyptian traders' shops were full of utensils, household equipment and groceries.\* The Nubian traders dealt in the general day-to-day consumers' articles. Coffee shops were established at block corners, which were in most cases equipped with poor furniture and radio sets switched on at full volume. Here smugglers and swindlers made their rendezvous, and idlers and newshunters resorted for their daily gossip, while tobacco smoke bubbled from their Turkish *shishas*. These coffee shops normally offered good nests for rumours to hatch.

In addition to these different trades, the market swarmed with shoemakers, carpenters, blacksmiths, antique dealers, tailors, fruitsellers and produce traders whose main trade was the export of dates to Egypt, and customs agents. At the north end of the market area, the bakeries and flour mills were busy baking bread and grinding wheat and grain. The meat and vegetable sheds were at the north-east corner. This section of the market was always crowded and noisy in the mornings. Butchers shouted at the tops of their harsh voices to the crowds of customers carrying empty baskets in front of the stalls. Vegetable retailers quarrelled over quantities of tomatoes, melons or bundles of *mulukhia* just off-loaded by the village producers from the backs of their donkeys; sellers and hawkers of bread, chicken and eggs and hawkers shouted slogans to attract the buyers. Tea sellers cried out and rattled cups rhythmically between their fingers like Spanish dancers. Add to all this the barking of stray dogs around the meat sheds, the croaking of chickens, the quacking of ducks, the braying of donkeys and the heavy noise of the flour mills. In fact, it was because of this tumult that everybody shouted to make his voice heard. On the river bank, at the west end of the market area, were the hotels, restaurants, bars and tourist agencies. At the entry of the main road at the south end, the Government intermediate school, with its two-storey boarding house, was prominent.

East of the market area was a wide open space commonly used for the celebration of national occasions. That space separated the market from the Arkawit quarter, which was mainly inhabited by Eleigat, Kunuz, and families of Egyptian origin. The two-storeyed houses of Ali

\* See also below, p. 35.



Hasaballa Lashin, Abd el Ghani Ali Musa, Abdu Ahmed Suliman and Shorbagi Adam were the most prominent buildings in this area. The rest of the dwellings were built of mud bricks smeared with sand plaster and covered with lime wash. At the northern end of this quarter were the houses of the Halfa police with their characteristic hemispherical roofs. At the south end was the high building of the famous Sidi Ibrahim tomb at the north end of the graveyard. Sidi Ibrahim el Mirghani, the cousin of El Sayed Ali el Mirghani of the Khatmia sect, died in Wadi Halfa on his way to Cairo. The Ahlia intermediate school with its fine laboratory building, and the cinema house with its rickety wide screen, were also at the southern end of this quarter.

Further south and exactly opposite the hospital and *merkaz* building one would see the newly developed houses of the Abbasia quarter, which were built of stone with large arched windows in the outer walls, without any joinery. Behind these two rows of handsome houses of the Abbasia lay Tippetts quarter with its crowded mud dwellings which couldn't claim to be better than slums. This area was mainly inhabited by some Kunuz families and non-Nubian Sudanese workers. West of this quarter, and across the main road, extended Hai Osman, which was built to the same low standard and occupied by a similar mixture of inhabitants.

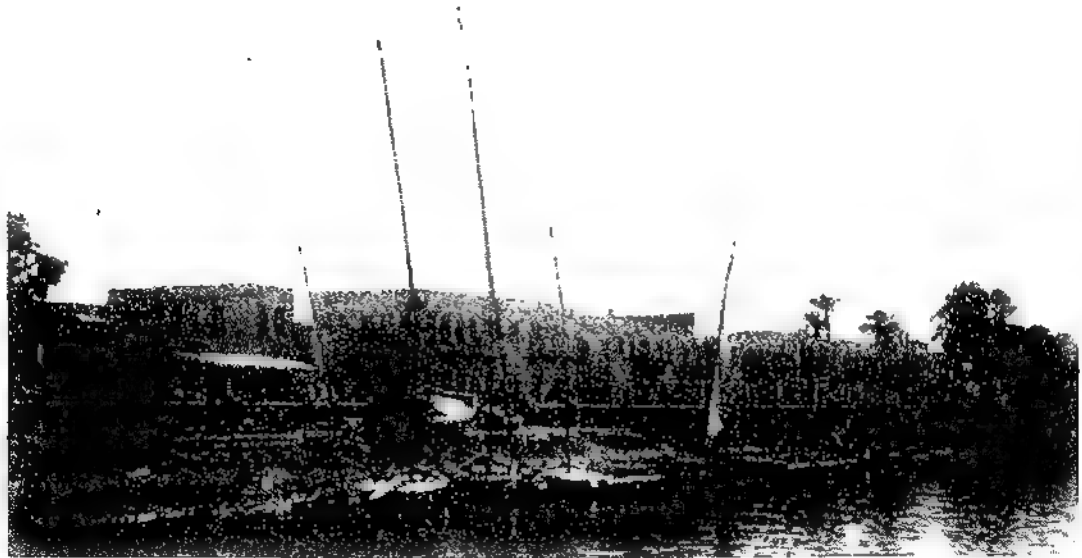
North of Arkawit and a little to the west, the Basalwa quarter straggled for a distance of two miles. It was the biggest lodging area in the whole town, and because its inhabitants outnumbered the rest of the town population, they were nicknamed El Rus, 'the Russians'; perhaps 'the Chinese' might have been more appropriate. They were all Egyptians who had emigrated from Upper Egypt and finding life easier in Wadi Halfa had finally settled there and adopted Sudanese nationality. They were a hard-working class, and so the majority of them had tough manual jobs in the market and government departments. Some were petty traders, and a very few were substantial merchants. As they had come to Halfa during the last forty years they still cherished the traditional way of life of the Egyptian *fellah*. Their houses were narrow and mostly they slept on the sandy roads in summer, and only used the limited accommodation of their rooms in winter. The background of their abodes was typical '*Saidi*', with their chickens, geese, ducks, goats and pigeons all bred in the house; their womenfolk mostly engaged in baking bread. Passing along any road in the Basalwa quarter one couldn't fail to notice the smell of fowls blended with that of hot bread, all coming out in one whiff. The most attractive buildings of this area were the houses of Haj Zeidan and Sayed Hamid, the leading notables of the neighbourhood. Although the Basalwa were rejected by the Nubians, yet I found them decent, realistic

and hard-working. During my stay in Wadi Halfa I traced some blood relationship between the Basalwa of Wadi Halfa and the Beseilia of Wad Medani, the town in the central Sudan. Both groups had originally emigrated from Boseil in Upper Egypt and the two names were both derived from the same origin.

North of the Basalwa quarter and almost parallel to the river bank lay Dabarosa quarter. It was separated from the Tawfikia by the football stadium, a small cemetery, the *merkaz* fruit garden and the official and police clubs. This was the original quarter of Halfa town, and its history went back further than the Tawfikia. Dabarosa village had existed before Halfa town was ever known; this was evident from the fact that it was the only quarter in the whole town inhabited exclusively by the Nubians. The houses were mostly built of mud in the traditional Nubian style, and very few were built on modern lines. As this quarter extended far from the market, the council developed a small bazaar in which the daily requirements of consumers were sold.

Until 1946 Dabarosa was situated on the river bank, but when the great Nile flood occurred in that year, all the dwelling houses crumbled away beneath the water, and the natives had to move inland and resettle on higher ground. The old village site was converted into agricultural land, which was used for the cultivation of a variety of crops. The cluster of thick palm trees on the river front marked the site of the old village houses.

East of Dabarosa and north of the Basalwa stretched the Jebel quarter. It was the poorest quarter in the whole town and very few of



4. Wadi Halfa from the river

*Wadi Halfa: Description*

the houses could claim a better standard of building than a native lodging area. Most of them were slum houses, as packed and narrow as pigeon holes. The inhabitants were a community of negroid blood, who were basically the remnant of the Sudanese battalions who camped at El Geiger during the years of preparation for the reconquest of the Sudan. Most of them were originally from the Nuba mountains of Kordofan Province, and although they had been Nubianised, they still kept some of their original traditions, such as their dialect, their songs and the famous *kambala* dance.

Behind the Jebel was a small cemetery, and the agricultural scheme of Mohamed Ali Ibrahim covering the area between the Jebel and the army barracks at the north town boundary.

## WADI HALFA: HISTORY

Perhaps it may be of interest to devote a few pages to the history of Halfa town, mainly because the narrative has never been documented. Nearly all who saw the first settlers are dead, and those still alive are too old to be able to say when it was founded. The historical records published at the end of Turkish rule contained no useful material. Both Slatin and Father Ohrwalder made only casual mention of Wadi Halfa in their respective books — *Fire and Sword in the Sudan*\* and *Ten Years' Captivity in the Mahdi's Camp*.† This was partly because they had served in areas remote from Wadi Halfa, and partly due to the insignificance of Halfa itself in those days. When Slatin described the route of his first journey to the Sudan via Aswan in 1878, he mentioned Korosko and Berber. Father Ohrwalder, who entered the Sudan via Suakin in 1880, escaped by the desert road from Abu Hamad via Murrat wells and struck the Nile at Korosko, north of Wadi Halfa, in 1891. Slatin selected the Allagi route across the desert straight from Abu Hamad to Aswan in 1895. In those days the normal route from Aswan to Berber passed from Korosko direct to Abu Hamad, which was a short cut compared to the route Korosko—Halfa—Abu Hamad. When Cromer first came to Egypt in 1879, a railway post already existed in the town, and so his mention of Halfa in *Modern Egypt*‡ was more or less a matter of fact.

No historical documents of value were in the government archives in Khartoum to throw light on the state of affairs in this part of the country before 1892. However, Halfa and its vicinity had never been subjugated by Mahdism, and the official boundary of Dongola province during the emirates of Nijumi and Yunis Wad el Dikeim was Suarda, some 130 miles south of Halfa. Ali Mubarak, who visited Halfa in 1892,

\* London and New York, 1896.

† London, 1892.

‡ London, 1908.

stated in his book *El Khitat el Tawfikia el Jadida*\* that during the Turkiya the word Halfa meant all the area lying between the First and Second Cataracts, ending the south at Khor Halfa, some eleven days' journey north of Dongola. He also mentioned that the area was part of Aswan province with an administrative centre at El Dirr village. It is highly probable, therefore, that documents concerning the administration and foundation of Halfa town may be available in the Abdin archives in Cairo.

The famous travellers who visited the Sudan during the Turkiya were not attracted by the Wadi Halfa locality, and their impressions were largely devoted to archaeological sites. Linant de Bellefonds published his impressions of his tour to Sennar in 1821.† The extract quoted below is a translation from the French:

On 28 August we arrived at a village north of Argin. It was a big village with extensive cultivable land, and date palm trees. In less than eleven hours we arrived at an island abreast of Wadi Halfa, and in the evening we arrived at Wadi Halfa itself. Mustafa Agha, the ruler of the area, was absent in Dongola to make arrangements for the return of the boats, which were sent by Ismail Pasha, and to facilitate their passage across the great cataract. This cataract had been blasted by Mohamed Ali Pasha before the conquest of the Sudan and became passable to boats.

Linant then mentioned that he camped under a tree in order to evade the Turkish villains who were in the village (probably Dabarosa), and as a sandstorm compelled him to move south next day, he spent the night at Makhazin el Shuna below the cataract. He then described the passage opened in the cataract: 'The passage of boats across the cataract lay on the east side of the river. It did not appear as difficult as that of Aswan; but perhaps it was because I saw it at high Nile that it looked so easy.'

The historical books do not indicate when the town of Halfa was founded. Mekki Shibeika in *El Sudan fi Garn*‡ mentioned that the troops of Mohamed Ali Pasha had blown up some of the boulders in the Second Cataract near Halfa Town in order to secure a passage for the boats. It looks to me as if Professor Mekki mentioned Wadi Halfa to

\* 'The New Tawfikian Plan', Cairo 1894. Refers to Khedive Tawfik of Egypt.

† *Journal d'un Voyage à Méroé dans les Années 1821 et 1822*, ed. Margaret Shinnie, Sudan Antiquities Service, Occasional Paper No. 4, 1958.

‡ Cairo, 1947.

convey to the reader the whereabouts of the Cataract, rather than to assert the existence of the town in those days. Some glimpses are found in *Egypt in the Sudan*\* by Richard Hill, who in his commentary on the railway scheme mentioned that, at the Khedive's request, an engineer called Fowler had planned communications to connect Cairo with Khartoum in 1873. Fowler proposed a navigation route to Halfa, and a railway line from Halfa to Khartoum North passing by Koka, Debba and Metemma. He also mentioned that the execution of the plan began in 1875 at Wadi Halfa, and that the line reached Saras in 1877 where it stopped owing to the opposition of General Gordon. This is the earliest incident concerned with Wadi Halfa town. Hill did not give a description of Halfa when the line started. It is probable that until that time Halfa denoted simply a map location at the north end of the Cataract, or implied the area lying near Khor Halfa, which might have been an earlier name for Khor Musa Pasha, which is still full of the coarse *halfa* grass. Evidently the start of the railway was not due to the importance of an existing town, but rather because Halfa was situated at the tail of the Cataract: the railway line was started where navigation ended.

The surviving traces of Turkish rule in Wadi Halfa town reveal important evidence. First, there is no doubt that the *Sirdaria* building existed during the first term of Gordon's governor-generalship in the Sudan, 1877–9, and that he used it as a rest house on one of his visits in that period, perhaps for the inspection of the railway work which he had terminated at Saras. It is highly improbable that he used it during his last period of service in the Sudan in 1884. Cromer stated that Gordon took the road from Korosko to Abu Hamad and Berber in his hurried journey to Khartoum. This meant that Gordon never passed by Wadi Halfa in 1884. Secondly the Geiger mosque was built during the reign of Ismail Pasha (1863–79), denoting that there was some population in the area. In the meantime no historical book alluded to Wadi Halfa in the early part of Ismail's reign except that Daud Barakat, in his Arabic book *The Egyptian Sudan and the Interest of British Policy*,† stated that the railway works had started in 1877 during the time of Gordon.

This short survey of available historical facts tends to give an idea that the town was born at the outset of the railway works, some time towards the end of the governor-generalship of Ismail Pasha Ayub (1873–7) or during the time of Gordon (1877–9). In all probability El

\* Oxford University Press, London, 1959.

† Cairo, 1934.

Geiger (i.e. military encampment) emerged as a railway regiment or a labour camp with railway workshops, and a line of mud huts inhabited by the workers, and continued as such until 1885 when it was converted into a military garrison.

After the fall of Khartoum the strategic position of Halfa became specially important. It was the most important post on the Egyptian frontier as it was situated at the terminus of the navigation route from Aswan. Moreover it was sited at the end of a formidable cataract which blocked the river to the south against navigation of any sort. In addition to all this it was the head of the railway line to Saras. All these military advantages proved their worth and were put to use in the Gordon relief expedition and the repulse of Nijumi's attacks on Halfa district, while in 1896 Halfa was used as a springboard for the reconquest of the Sudan.

On 13 August 1884 Wood and Wingate\* arrived in Wadi Halfa, and converted the post to a military base for the advance of the Gordon relief expedition. Arrangements were made for the collection of riding and baggage camels, native boats and stores. Soon after, the troops arrived on the steamers and the post was flooded with soldiers and supplies. Lord Wolseley arrived on 8 October. Being unaware of the unique difficulties of the Second Cataract, he brought with him a small flotilla of whaler boats which he intended to use as supply transport of the expedition. However, an attempt to pass them over the Cataract failed, and the whalers were left downstream from the Cataract, *giyasas* being used instead. An attempt to pass the steamers through was first made by the *giyasas* under the able direction of Daud Kokki, the sheikh of the Cataract. This was accomplished with very little loss. On 19 October the six steamers managed to get through El Bab el Kebir with great difficulty and heavy loss to the native pilot boats, which were 'smashed to matchwood' as Wingate described it. A small dockyard was built at Gemai (twenty km. south of Wadi Halfa), and stores and supplies were sent direct to Saras by train drawn by the one and only locomotive available. Thomas Archer, in his *War in Egypt and the Sudan*,† described Halfa in those days as ten or a dozen huts with railway buildings.

During the last week of October the relief expedition force left Halfa on board the steamers heading for Dongola. On its failure and return, the force was held at Wadi Halfa and became a frontier field force with the object of protecting Egypt from invasion. To protect the railway

\* Later wellknown as Field-Marshal Sir Evelyn Wood and General Sir Reginald Wingate.

† London: Blackie, c. 1887.



line, a garrison was created at Kosha, with outposts at Dal and Magraka; this was in an open space commanding both sides of the river. This post was also intended to protect Akasha, twenty-two miles to the north, which by that time was a railhead. At Argo and the Mahas-Sukkot area a form of native administration was created under the governorship of Melek Tambal, with Sheikh Mahjub Idris in charge of the Mahas and Sukkot area. They were supposed to run some sort of administration as long as they could.

By that time the river fleet had gathered south of the Cataract with an arsenal and workshop at Gemai. Part of this fleet was kept on river patrol during the years 1885–96; this consisted of the following steamers: *Akasha*, *Kaibar*, *Dal*, *Abu Klea*, *El Teb*, *Tamai* and *Metemma*. In 1896 they went through to Khartoum with the invasion troops, while the smaller steamers — *Ibis*, *Toski*, *Ambigol*, *Hyksos*, *Tanjore* and *Semma* — were plying on the Halfa-Shellal reach. Thomas Cook and Son were the owners of these steamers.

When the garrison was withdrawn from Dongola and the force retreated to Halfa in the summer of 1885, the Mahdi's force followed on its heels and occupied Dongola. Abdel Rahman el Nijumi was appointed *amir* of the area, and when he advanced from Dongola, Melek Tambal escaped to Akasha, but Sheikh Mahjub Idris resisted. In November Wad el Nijumi's force moved from Amara, a village in Abri (the country of Sukkot), and by evading the garrison at Kosha, it attacked the outpost at Umbakol and removed a mile of the railway line. After a few days, it renewed its attack on the fort. A troop train was sent from Wadi Halfa, and a strong force under Butler caused the besiegers to retire. Between 1886 and 1889 skirmishes and small fights continued, during which the village of Firka was raided and the Ansar — the Mahdist army — sent big reinforcements to invest the fort at Kosha. A small fight ensued, and Nijumi's force was compelled to retreat; it was pursued further south and defeated at the battle of Ginnis. The Ansar then withdrew to Kerma and a quiet period seems to have begun. The British force was sent back to Aswan, leaving the Egyptian army to garrison Wadi Halfa.

When the withdrawal of the British force to Aswan was known in Omdurman, the Khalifa summoned Wad el Nijumi and formally entrusted him with the command of the campaign for the invasion of Egypt. Wingate says: 'Nijumi burnt his house in Omdurman and vowed that he would not return until he had conquered Egypt.' He collected a force of 11,000, mostly from the Jaaliyin and Batahin Arabs, and went to Dongola. Meanwhile Yunis Wad el Dikeim was sent to receive him as *amir* of the area. Father Ohrwalder described the detachments sent to take part in Wad el Nijumi's campaign in their daily march along the

main street going north of Omdurman as 'lambs sent to the slaughter' and as none of them ever returned the street was called the Martyrs' Road (*Shari el Shuhada*), a name which survives to the present day.

In 1887 Wad el Nijumi moved to Farka. On 27 April an advance party of 200 Ansar was seen in the vicinity of Saras. The Egyptian army arrived after a night's march and annihilated it. After that skirmishes ceased on the frontier, owing to the outbreak of hostilities by Salih Salim of the Kababish Arabs of Kordofan whom Nijumi received orders to destroy. Salih was killed and his tribe subjugated. Nijumi now moved his force in large concentrations from Farka to Semna. Towards the end of September Nijumi's followers occupied Saras. On 25 October, about 1,000 of them were seen making their way towards Wadi Halfa; they had established an outpost at Gemai some thirteen miles south of Halfa town. Their advance was delayed owing to a shortage of food and an outbreak of smallpox. In 1888 no events of importance took place, except that after the attack on Allagi village and the defeat of the Ababda, the desert column struck on the east of the Nile and raided Kalabsha. The force of Nijumi was depleted owing to troubles with Ethiopia, and he himself went to Omdurman. During his absence some of his followers raided Dabarosa.

On 19 July 1888, Dabarosa was mercilessly raided by a section of the Jihadiya, who set fire to the dwelling houses and subjected the village to heavy looting; fifty people were killed, and a further one hundred and thirty-seven were drowned while attempting to reach the boats. Later it was discovered that they had been betrayed by a certain Abu Zeid, one of their own number, who planned the raid with Nijumi's force. This Abu Zeid, commonly called by the Nubians *El Jazzar* (the butcher), had quarrelled bitterly with his people over a marriage affair; his own kinsfolk had defeated him. To restore his honour he decided on revenge, and so went straight to Nijumi's force who were camping near Khor Musa Pasha, a location south of Halfa, and encouraged them to sack the village. He told them that Dabarosa was full of fat animals and food supplies, and that it was the granary of the whole town. To make his suggestion more practical he informed them that the village was easily accessible being outside the fortified area — as in fact it was. No offer could have been more tempting to a hungry warrior than this — hence the raid. After the battle of Toshki, Abu Zeid was captured and publicly executed in an open space in Dabarosa village.

In June 1889 Wad el Nijumi came back after the Khalifa's victory on the Ethiopian front, with a force of 11,000. At Saras he was joined by 1,200 fighting men who were in the garrison there. Persistent rumours reached Wadi Halfa that the expected advance for the invasion of Egypt

would proceed along the west bank of the Nile, instead of the east. This had induced the authorities to block his way at vulnerable points along the west bank. At last the expected invasion started. Nijumi crossed to the west bank at Saras and selected a route parallel to, but at a distance from, the river, hoping to turn Wadi Halfa and strike the river at a point between it and Korosko. After a tedious march in the hot desert, they took up a position two miles west of Argin, and four miles north of Wadi Halfa. They made a daring attack on the village and had a sharp engagement with the force of Colonel Wodehouse who, with the aid of the steamers and barges and 2,000 troops, repulsed the attack. I saw the fragments of bleached bones and finger-nails of the casualties scattered on the sand below Jebel Deim in 1960. At the same time reinforcements were hurried from Cairo, for the final reckoning. The state of Nijumi's army was pathetic: the Nubians refused to join him, his food supply was exhausted, and his men were reduced to starvation. No supplies were expected from Dongola or Omdurman, as it was the year in which drought and locusts together had swept the entire cultivations of the Sudan.

Grenfell summoned Nijumi to surrender; Nijumi persisted. He continued his march north until on 2 July he camped in a plain five miles from the village of Toski. Early in the morning of 3 July the famous battle was fought and his army was routed. Wad el Nijumi and most of his *emirs*, as well as 1,200 men, were killed.

Let us now consider the effects of Nijumi's campaign on the town of Wadi Halfa. In the first place, meagre and disorderly though the campaign was, it gave clear proof that the Khalifa was serious about the invasion of Egypt, which was in fact part of the mission of Mahdism; the Mahdi proclaimed that his reformation had to cover Egypt, Palestine and the Holy Land of Arabia. The Khalifa would not deviate from the plan left to him by his master for execution. Thus Halfa was created as a frontier base with a strong fortified garrison to repulse Nijumi's advance and to combat any hostile operation coming from the south. Hostilities and skirmishes continued up to 1896 along the Akasha-Saras reach.

During this period the concentration of military forces at El Geiger had attracted more traders to settle in the town. In the meantime the sense of insecurity felt by the inhabitants of the villages around Halfa during the advance of Nijumi had compelled them to quit their homes in the rural area and seek safety in the town. Along with this rush to town came a considerable number of former soldiers. The population must have increased by leaps and bounds during those days.

Services now had to be provided for a military and civil population. A hospital was built. A post and telegraph office was created to provide

the important contact with Cairo and with the outposts around Halfa. River transport became regular and efficient, and military and commercial supplies poured into the growing town. Halfa had now assumed such military and political importance that the centre of the administration of Nubia at El Dirr was closed down and moved there. The city lights also attracted the Nubians in the north reach, who swarmed in the streets of the new capital either for employment or to carry on business; later they became settlers. During my six years' stay I observed that most of the Nubian families who lived in the villages between the Second Cataract and Faras were in regular social contact with their relations living near the Egyptian border, who were linked to them by blood ties. The crushing of Mahjub Idris and the sacking of the Mahas and Sukkot area by Nijumi had driven some of the inhabitants to Wadi Halfa, where they squatted until they returned after the battle of Farka on 7 June 1896, the first serious battle during the reconquest.

There is more than one item of evidence to show that the settlement of Egyptian families in Wadi Halfa was encouraged during those days. A school was built at the Tawfikia, the Khedive built a mosque and the market took shape.

Ali Mubarak in his book *El Khitat el Tawfikia* described Wadi Halfa during those days as follows:

The village of Wadi Halfa was the most famous locality in the area lying along the banks of the Nile between the First and Second Cataracts. It included a post office, corn stores and an administration centre. It also consisted of government buildings of good standard. There were also a school, a mosque, date palms and water wheels. Its cultivable land though limited was yet very fertile. The village also had its coffee shops, rest houses, bars and a permanent market. In some of the English books it was mentioned that lower Nubia meant the land along the Nile between Halfa and Aswan. It was a narrow strip along the banks of the Nile, lying between ranges of black rocks, and extending for 350 km. The traveller from Aswan to Wadi Halfa, or vice versa, will observe small hamlets in that valley composed of five or six houses each, overshadowed by date or *dom* [stone fruit] palms and other trees. Most of these villages were situated on the east bank. The area contains many ancient sites. As these villages were built at the confluence of valleys with the Nile, they derived their names from these valleys. Sometimes a group of villages were called after the name of a single valley. (Page 38.)

Na'um Shuqair, who accompanied the reconquest campaign, described Halfa in his *History and Geography of the Sudan*:\*

\* Arabic text, entitled *Ta'rikh wa Joghrafiyat el Sudan*, Cairo, 1903.

Halfa was a small village 226 miles south of the First Cataract. Co-ordinates were  $21^{\circ}55'$  and  $31^{\circ}19'$ . Army barracks were built in its vicinity, which were occupied by the Egyptian army during the Mahdist revolt in order to guard the frontier. This military camp included a military hospital and prison, and was situated at the head of the railway line. There was also a furnace for smelting iron, the residence of the governor and commandant and an old mosque. At a distance of two miles north lay the town of the Tawfikya which was previously called Dabarosa in which Khedive Tawfik had built a mosque. Traders and business men had collected in this centre and built one of the best commercial centres on the frontier. (Vol. 1, p. 78.)

Yet a third and most interesting description of the Geiger and the town in 1896 was given by Winston Churchill in *The River War*:\*

The town and cantonment, nowhere more than 400 yards in width, straggle along the river-bank, squeezed in between the water and the desert, for nearly three miles. The houses, offices and barracks are all built of mud and the aspect of the place is brown and squalid. A few buildings, however, attain to the dignity of two storeys. At the northern end of the town a group of fairly well built houses occupy the river front, and a distant view of the clusters of palm trees, of the white walls, and the minaret of the mosque refreshes the weary traveller from Korosko or Shellal with hopes of civilized entertainment. The whole town is protected towards the desert by a ditch and mud wall, and heavy Krupp field-pieces are mounted on little bastions where the ends of the rampart rest upon the river. Five small detached forts strengthen the land front and the futility of the Arab attack at this time was evident. Halfa had now become the terminus of the railway, which was rapidly extending; and the continual arrival and despatch of tons of material, the building of sheds, workshops, and storehouses lent the African slum the bustle and activity of a civilized city.

Minute descriptive details about El Geiger could be given, since by a stroke of good luck an old map of El Geiger was found among the exhibits of Halfa museum. It had been drawn by the military surveyor Captain Mohamed Eff. Ghalib of the Egyptian Army on 30 December 1896. With its numbered buildings this map discloses precisely what lay inside the formidable walls of the fortified area.

Side by side with the development of El Geiger, the Tawfikia was emerging rapidly. Khedive Tawfik had inaugurated the mosque in 1892; the rush of troops to Halfa had nourished trade, and eventually more foreign traders arrived and settled there. Fine houses were built around

\* London, New York, etc., 1899.

the mosque, and shops full of trade stock began to increase in number. The Greek, Nicholas Loiso, and his two brothers Costa and Petro were the first settlers. During the reconquest Nicholas followed Kitchener throughout the expedition until the fall of Omdurman. Other well-known Greeks were Evangelos Panas, Dimitri Georgianis, Panaioti Carbonopoulo and the famous Capato. All were grocers who had come from Egypt and established business with the army in Wadi Halfa. There was a saying, during those imperial days, that whenever a British officer was sent on a military conquest, a Greek grocer always went too to provide him with his whisky ration. During the course of my casual reading of the historical events of the Sudan, I came across four incidents to support the truth of this quip. When Colonel Stewart was assassinated by the Manasir at Heybeh in 1884, Greek traders were accompanying him in a sailing boat all the way from Khartoum to that village. When Slatin was sent to the Mahdi at Rahad after the capitulation of Darfur in 1884 a certain Dimitri Zagada, a Greek grocer at Dara, was taken with him and remained in captivity throughout the Mahdia. On reading the records of the Nuer settlement when I was in Fanjak, I learnt that when the District Commissioner Ferguson was murdered by the Nuer at Adok in 1927, a Greek grocer who was accompanying him emptied the magazine of his revolver and died loyally beside his patron. The fourth incident was the arrival of Nicholas Loiso during the days of preparation for the reconquest.

The Greek community were the pioneers who introduced modern trade in the Sudan, and we owe them respect and gratitude. The Syrian drapers too came bringing the fine silk of Damascus and foreign cloth from Cairo; in Wadi Halfa they built their shops and lived in two-storeyed houses. Aziz Yaghmur and his brother Bashir, George Hakim and his brother Habib, Mahmud Abu Zeid and Asad Eff. Rashid were the first families from Syria who settled at Wadi Halfa. Their descendants, who adopted Sudanese nationality, were among the best businessmen in the town. To an even larger extent, Halfa in those days attracted Egyptian families. Most of them were general traders dealing in household equipment and utensils. Ali el Shami, Mohamed and Abd el Magid Allob, Abdalla and his brother Salih Mahros and Tilib Ahmed Awad were the first Egyptian traders who settled in the Tawfikia. After the conquest, more Syrian and Egyptian families such as Khueilid and Abd el Ghafur Abu Zeid, Obeid Yusuf and others joined in and made Halfa their home.

In the meantime the Tawfikia grew steadily with a market and a mosque. In 1895 the first elementary school was opened in the building later occupied by the intermediate school, under an Egyptian headmaster. A double-storey hotel was built on the riverfront opposite the

market; it was used after the reconquest as the province H.Q. and in the 1920s, when the existing *merkaz* was erected, the building became the offices of the railway department. On the whole in those days the Tawfikia looked more municipal than rural, and Dabarosa, the original nucleus of the area, had faded into the background. The city had already started to take shape. A photograph taken by E. A. Wallis Budge in 1900 and published in his book *The Egyptian Sudan: its History and Monuments*\* gives a good idea of how the Tawfikia looked in those days. None of the hotels and business houses between the shop of Uthman Abd el Gadir and the railway offices had yet been built, nor had the Greek church. Budge did not give a description of the Tawfikia.

On 12 March 1896 Cromer issued instructions to the *Sirdar*, Kitchener, to launch the invasion of Dongola province, with specific orders directing him to seize Akasha, which was occupied without resistance as the village was evacuated by the Ansar. By this time big reinforcements were steadily moving in from Cairo to form the invasion army. Battalion after battalion disembarked from Thomas Cook steamers at Wadi Halfa and marched to the line of advance. Between 20 March and 6 June a total force of 9,100 regular troops – seven squadrons of cavalry, the Camel Corps, one infantry battalion, one battery of horse artillery, and two maxim guns had concentrated on the rocky Akasha plain, ready for the second leap on Farka. In the evening of that day the force moved south under the command of the *Sirdar*. The Ansar retreated to Dongola. Eventually Kosha, six miles from Farka, was seized and an advance party hurried still further south, establishing an outpost at Suarda.

During those days Halfa was deserted, and the British battalion were the only military in the garrison. Towards the end of June there was a severe cholera epidemic which caused numerous deaths in the town; the British battalion had moved to Saras. Soon the infection was carried south and harassed the army concentrations at Farka. During the short time the epidemic lasted, there were about 1,000 deaths. When it subsided, the army moved to Kosha.

During those days which preceded the advance to Dongola two incidents of importance occurred. One of them was so decisive that it could be considered the turning point in the history of Halfa town. In fact Halfa owed its existence and survival to it.

Throughout the history of the Sudan one cannot fail to observe the importance of the Second Cataract in the train of events. From ancient times this formidable barrier has constituted a major problem to

\* 2 vols., London, 1907.



invaders and conquerors. The ancient Pharaohs did not dare to cut a passage through but contented themselves with establishing their fortified towns at Buhen and Semna to secure the transshipment of goods and their safe despatch overland to the other end of the Cataract. In 1820, when Mohamed Ali launched his invasion under the command of his son Ismail, the sailing fleet gathered in despair at the lower end of the Cataract and the expedition would have been given up, but for the historic act of dynamiting a channel through the hard rocks, which enabled the sailing fleet and *giyasas* to be pulled through. During the summer of 1962, just before the flood, on one of my visits to the assistant dockyard manager who was attempting to widen the same passage by the same means, I was shown the old inject holes in the rocks and the fragments of granite strewn on the dry bed of the channel, which were the relics of that adventure (see p. 200). Then came the relief expedition. With great toil and heavy loss to the sailing vessels, the steamers were pulled through by hawsers and cables, by the labour of 3,000 men.

On 14 August 1896, at the start of the flood, the four gunboats *Metemma*, *Abu Klea*, *Dal* and *Akasha* steamed safely through the channel of Ismail and moored at the southern end of El Bab el Kebir, where the river level dropped steeply (see p. 202). The first boat, *Metemma*, was carefully unloaded of all its heavy equipment, the hull was covered from stern to bow with wooden boards to protect it from any damage, and hawsers and cables were then extended to the top of the flat shoulder banks of the gorge. It took 2,000 soldiers a full hour and a half to pull it up the steep, boiling stream. In the same way the rest of the flotilla was bodily pulled to clear water. Details of this ordeal are to be found in *The River War* by Winston Churchill.

Before coming to the second point I wish to pause at the Second Cataract, which was considered a rare phenomenon of nature, but which now lies under fathoms of water. This cataract, 10 km. south of Halfa town, was a conglomeration of countless volcanic islands which blocked the river course from bank to bank, for eight miles, leaving only narrow deep gorges and clefts through which the river, broken up into small torrential streams, rushed with as much power as though being released from a steep waterfall, the patches of white foam swallowed by the deep eddies and whirlpools. The current, after descending steeply from El Bab el Kebir, turned upstream, then down the slope on the other side of the boulder. The Kokki islands, around which the current perpetually swirled, had become glazed and shiny, their black and violet colour glittering like marble. Viewed from the top of Abu Sir Rock on the west bank of the river, opposite Abka village, this scene surpassed all limits in its magnificence.



Abu Sir Rock itself was a famous feature of the locality. It stood 20 metres high, right on the bank of the river, and the side facing the river was almost vertical from the summit to the river bed. The west side was a smooth slope leading up to the famous 'pulpit' rock, as it was known, on which it was the custom for about two hundred years for travellers to carve their names.

The second episode was the construction of the desert railway. Three alternative plans were considered: from Korti passing by Abu Tuleih and across the Gakdul desert to Metemma; along the famous Suakin-Berber road; and across the Nubian desert from Korosko to Abu Hamad passing by Wadi Halfa. After lengthy study the Nubian desert scheme was selected, in spite of the opposition and criticisms of the military and engineering authorities in England.

Two of the alternative proposals would have had adverse consequences for the future of Wadi Halfa. Had the Suakin-Berber route been selected, the main line of supply would have been shifted to the Red Sea and Halfa might have been abandoned, and the international boundary might have been fixed somewhere in the Sukkot area. Meanwhile, had the Nubian desert railway been adopted, with its terminus at Korosko, Halfa would have been reduced to a small railway station and the existing harbour might have been moved north to Korosko, in which case Korosko might have been included in the Sudan.

But mainly because there were already railway workshops in Wadi Halfa, Korosko was excluded and it was determined that the line should start from Halfa, although this arrangement prolonged the river journey from Aswan by two days. When the final decision was taken, the *Sirdar* ordered the execution of the plan to start forthwith. Girouard, the chief railway engineer, went to England and purchased fifteen locomotives and 200 trucks. Rails, sleepers, water tanks, rolling stock, rail equipment and spare parts of all sorts poured into Wadi Halfa, and the workshops were enlarged. Engineers and artisans, railway technicians and mechanics were recruited, and skilled and casual native labour was employed. Two railway technical institutes were inaugurated to train new personnel. At the very beginning of 1897 the first sleepers were laid and the work went ahead for forty miles: then a lull ensued until all preparations were ready. On 8 May the real steady work began. It progressed at the rate of  $\frac{1}{2}$  km. a day and reached Abu Hamad in November.

It is needless to stress here the historical role played by this railway line in shaping the future of Halfa town. Before the Saras line, there was no trace of a town, and the area was desert except for nine families in Dabarosa village at the extreme north. When the line started, a labour

camp and the lines of the Railway Regiment appeared at El Geiger, with a big mosque and railway workshops. After the failure of the relief expedition and the abandonment of the Dongola garrison, it was decided to extend the line to Akasha. More human energy was recruited. When the battle of Farka was fought and the garrison at El Geiger was deserted by the troops, the further extension of the line to Kerma fell on the Halfa workshops, and the railway population increased. After the surrender of Dongola and the reconquest of the whole Sudan was decided upon, the desert railway was planned to start from Wadi Halfa. Thus Halfa became the terminus of the first two railway-lines ever laid in the country. Moreover, with the strangling of Suakin harbour and the suffocation of the Suakin-Berber road by Uthman Digna, Halfa town emerged as the single port on which the main line of supply of an unparalleled expedition depended. Even after the reconquest, Halfa continued to hold this position until the inauguration of Port Sudan harbour in 1906. Even after this, Halfa remained as the main gate of trade activity between the Sudan and Egypt.

After the fall of Omdurman and the final destruction of the Khalifa at the battle of Gedid, the future political status of the Sudan was framed by Cromer after strenuous high-level discussions in London. Article I of the Condominium agreement of 19 January 1899, which had defined the boundary between the Sudan and Egypt and which affected the political administrative situation of Halfa, states:

The word 'Soudan' in this agreement means all territories south of 22nd parallel of latitude which:

1. Have never been evacuated by Egyptian troops in the year 1882:  
or
2. Which having before the rebellion in the Sudan been administered by the Government of His Highness the Khedive, were temporarily lost to Egypt and have been reconquered by Her Majesty's Government acting in concert or . . . .

It can be observed that Clause 2 did not apply to Wadi Halfa which had never been lost to Egypt during the Mahdist rebellion and which, before the rebellion, was administratively part of Egypt. It was rather curious to include Halfa and exclude Suakin, as specifically mentioned in Article 2, since the latter was the main port of the Sudan during Turkish rule. I do not mean to question the desirability of including Halfa in the Sudan, but neither Cromer nor Churchill explained the selection of Latitude 22 as the international boundary. Churchill only remarked sarcastically and untruthfully — that Latitude 22 was the dividing line between civilization and barbarism. This was certainly not true.

Latitude 22, this imaginary line crossing the Nile at Jebel Sahaba, 5 km. north of Wadi Halfa, was only an arbitrary boundary. It was selected neither on a geographical nor on an anthropological basis. It divided Nubia, which topographically, historically and ethnically was a single country, into two halves, each belonging to a different country. However, ethnically and socially the Nubians were obviously Sudanese, and had nothing in common with the Egyptians. Since the decline of ancient Egypt, Nubia, like other territories of the Sudan, had been independent, and remained so until the Arabs entered the Sudan bringing Islam with them. And as the Arabs came as settlers and not invaders, they eventually mixed with the Nubians, and Nubia remained as an autonomous region like the small kingdoms of Sennar and the Abdallab. During the Mameluk rule over Egypt, Nubia was not only independent; it was also inaccessible. This was made clear in the books of the famous explorers and travellers such as Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, Thomas Legh and Frederik Ludwig Norden, who had visited Nubia in the eighteenth century. Mekki Shibeika in his *El Sudan fi Garn* mentioned that when Mohamed Ali succeeded to the throne of Egypt, and determined to exterminate the Mameluks, those who lived in Upper Egypt fled in fear to Nubia to take shelter. The Nubians, who needed the protection of the Mameluks, made a virtue of necessity by welcoming those fugitives as rulers to their own country. When the great massacre of El Galaa, in which Mohamed Ali treacherously slew all the Mameluk leaders, took place in Cairo, their adherents in Nubia, in fear of meeting the same fate, surrendered with the whole of Nubia - to the hard-hearted new ruler. This incident marked the first inclusion of Nubia in the map of Egypt proper since ancient times. But it should be noted that the annexation took place only a few years before the Turkish conquest of the Sudan in 1820.

Had this historical and social background been taken into consideration, the international boundary might have been sited further north at Shellal (First Cataract), and the whole of Nubia might have assumed its natural place in the Sudan family. But it happened that Cromer had his unconsidered wish fulfilled.

In March 1899, by a local agreement between the commandant of Wadi Halfa and the police officer of the Tawfikia on one side, and the representative of the Egyptian Government Lands Department and the police officer of the old Halfa District on the other, the northern boundary of the Sudan by the Nile was shifted north from Latitude 22 to Faras. This agreement was approved by the Egyptian authorities as can be seen from the following letter on the delimitation of the Sudan boundary issued by the Ministry of Interior in Cairo on 26 March 1899 to the *Muhafaza* of El Nuba (Frontier Governorate):

We have read your letter No. 19 'Accounts' dated 14 March 1899 in which you state that in accordance with the request from the commandant of Halfa and in execution of the agreement made between H.B.M. The Queen of England and the Egyptian Government dated 19 January 1899, relative to the boundary separating Egypt from the Sudan, it has been agreed upon between the commandant above mentioned and the police officer, Tawfikia, on one part, and the representative of the Government Lands Department in that Muhafaza and the police officer of Halfa district on the other, to make furthest Northern Limit of the Sudan on the western side (of the Nile) a point 200 metres north of the Birba (a ruined building), of Faras, and on the eastern side (of the Nile) the Birba existing at Adindan; and that two boundary marks have been placed there, on the northern face of each is inscribed 'Egypt' and on the southern 'The Sudan' and that this took place in the presence of the Omdas and Sheikhs of the two villages above mentioned and that in consequence of this the village of Faras was ceded to the Sudan with the exception of 3 *feddans*, 2 *kerats* and 58 date trees which remained in Egypt, and of the taxed lands of Adindan which belonged to Egypt 99 *feddans*, 7 *kerats* and 155 date trees were ceded to the Sudan and that by this delimitation ten villages of the Muhafaza were included within the Sudan frontier the area of which amounts to 4,094 *feddans*, 12 *kerats* and 220 *sahams* of land, in which is included 112 *feddans*, 5 *kerats* and 12 *sahams* unregistered land as well as 82,206 date trees, and the number of their inhabitants amounts to 13,138 souls; that in accordance with the above you advise that the remainder of the two sub-districts of Halfa and Kunuz be divided and named as follows:

1. Halfa Merkaz (sub-district) to be called Dirr Merkaz with Headquarters at Korosko and to include 22 villages from Adindan on the south to Shaterma on the north, an extent of 152 kilometres, in which the taxed land amounts to 9,117 *feddans*, 10 *kerats* and 8 *sahams* and the date trees to 254,793 and the number of inhabitants to 31,703 souls.

2. Merkaz El Kunuz to be called Merkaz 'Abu Hor' with Headquarters at Abu Hor and to include 18 villages from Madik on the south to Shellal on the north, an extent of 144 kilometres, in which the taxed land amounts to 8,025 *feddans*, 5 *kerats*, the date trees to 110,440 and the number of inhabitants 32,319 souls, in accordance with the list and plan enclosed in your letter.

At the same time a letter No. 5 'Direct Taxes' has been received from the Ministry of Finance, stating that they had approved of the above which you have also communicated to them, but they recommend that Halfa Merkaz should be called Korosko Merkaz and not El Dirr as you suggested, and the Mudiria should be called Assuan Mudiria.

In addition to what you have said in your letter to the Ministry of

Interior, the Ministry of Finance have given in their letter the names of the said 10 villages which are as follows:

Sarra Shark, Faras, Gazirat Faras, Dibeira, Sarra Gharb, Ashkiet, Argin, Degheim, Ankash and Dabarosa, and that these 10 villages include in addition to the taxed land mentioned by you 720 *feddans*, 5 *kerats* and 8 *sahams* free Government land . . . .

And as we hereby approve of this delimitation, which included the number of villages, of inhabitants, the amount of taxed land and the number of date trees, and changing the name of Halfa Merkaz as recommended by the Ministry of Finance, as it is in the name of the Headquarters and of giving the Governorate the name of Assuan Mudiria. Therefore we have written this to you, to the Ministries of Justice, Public Works and Finance for information.

This shows how little men can make history.

It can be observed in this interesting document that the area ceded to the Sudan included three villages which lay south of Latitude 22, namely Dabarosa, Angash and Degheim which had never been under the administration of the Sudan before the conclusion of the January agreement. At the same time, no reason could be traced as to the selection of these two spots for the boundary. Perhaps it was included in the submission of the commandant referred to above.

After the reconquest expedition was over, the garrison at El Geiger was completely evacuated. The families of the Sudanese battalions who were living inside the fortifications were moved north-east of Dabarosa, where they were allotted plots for building their dwellings. At the same time most of the stores of ammunition, the arsenal and the lines of the Egyptian battalions were demolished. New, decent houses sprang up in the slum area of the Sudanese battalion lines, and the military hospital was converted into a railway headquarters and later a British club. At the Tawfikia Loiso erected a double-storey hotel commanding the market view from the river. The Greeks built a small Catholic church in the area later occupied by the customs house.

During the early years of the twentieth century the administration started to take a semi-civilian shape. During the years of preparation Halfa was under military rule and its administration was a mere cog in that huge war machine. Wodehouse was the first military governor, succeeded by Grenfell and then Hunter. When the *Sirdar* arrived in March 1896, he was the administrative chief as well as the military commander. When the war developed and the troops marched south, the administration was left to the commander of the British battalion left in reserve in the garrison. After the mud buildings of El Geiger were pulled down, the Government bought the hotel from Loiso and used the building as their provincial headquarters. The ground floor was

occupied by the Sharia court, and the clerical and accounts sections, and the first floor was left for the Governor and his British administrative assistants. The district headquarters functioned in the building later used as the museum. During the first ten years, the administration was unstable, and no policy could be drawn up owing to the very short tenure of office of the governors who served at Wadi Halfa. On comparing the names of the governors with the old quarterly list in the Khartoum archives, I discovered that Halfa had had twelve governors between 1905 and 1910. In 1905 alone, seven governors had served very short relay periods in the provincial headquarters. The civil administration took over in 1912, and Mr. G. E. Ile was appointed first civil governor. From that time, long spells of duty ranging two to seven years could be traced in the governorate roll. In 1922 an area used for *sagiya* cultivation between the customs department and Fort No. 5, known as Abu Fareig and Bish, was acquired by the government for generous compensation, and the hospital, railway station and the provincial headquarters were built on it. The Loiso hotel building was given to the Railway Department. In 1935 when, as a result of the policy of amalgamating the small provinces, Halfa was reduced to the level of a district affiliated to the Northern Province, which had its headquarters at El Damer. Mr. Purvis was the last governor. The districts at Abri and Delgo were abandoned, leaving only two police posts and native courts dealing with minor security problems.

It should be recalled here that the policy for indirect administration was first implemented in 1915 by a decree issued by the Governor-General, in terms of which *omdas* and village sheikhs were appointed from among the natives to help in carrying out tax collection and to assist the district commissioners in minor administrative duties. In 1924 a further step was taken with the creation of native courts, vested with the legal power to decide on minor criminal and civil cases in accordance with the uncoded customary law, based on the prevailing social and tribal traditions.

Between 1935 and 1953 six British district commissioners served in Halfa. Mr. R. T. Johnston was the first and Mr. Arbuthnot the last. Mr. Harrison and Mr. Penn were the best remembered. In 1948 the first Sudanese assistant district commissioner was appointed. He was the late Sayed Izz el Din Mukhtar, who served with Mr. Penn. In 1952 he was replaced by Sayed Allam Hassan. In August 1953 the administration was Sudanised and Sayed Mohamed Khalil Biteik, a prominent and popular Nubian administrator, was promoted to the rank of district commissioner and took over the administration of Halfa district. He remained for two years and on his promotion to deputy governor, Sayed Hassan Jubara, a colleague of mine, took over the district for one

year, being succeeded by my friend Abd el Sami Ghandur. I myself was the last administrator in charge of this area, which had to disappear below the waters of the High Dam lake.

At the close of the nineteenth century and during the first decade of this century, Halfa was chosen, because of its isolation from the rest of the Sudan and from Egypt, as an ideal place for the exile and custody of the important Mahdist prisoners who had been *emirs* or prominent leaders during the reign of the Khalifa. We now come to the story of these unfortunate heroes.

After the defeat of El Nijumi at Toski in 1889, all captives were taken to Cairo as prisoners-of-war. A special prison was built for them in 1893 at Rosetta, where they were sent to spend their unspecified terms of confinement. When the battle of Nikheila was fought in April 1898 Emir Mahmoud Wad Ahmed, the nephew of the Khalifa, surrendered with a large number of his men, including his three brothers, Ismail, Mohamed el Mahdi, and Ali. They were sent to join Toski prisoners at Wadi Halfa. Less important captives — Beshir Ahmed el Nagi, El Faki Muhammad Abu Haraz, Rashid Yunis, Muhammad Gar, Abd el Majid Hayam and Wad Gamar — were held in exile at Halfa military camp. At that time it was decided, in anticipation, to build another prison at Damietta for the detention of important prisoners and Mahdist leaders who might fall alive into the hands of the conquerors as the campaign progressed to Omdurman. After the battles of Kerreri and Um Dibeikerat, a big group of gallant *emirs* and important personalities, mostly of Taaysha and Danagla origin, were captured and deported for exile under military guard either by rail to Wadi Halfa or via Suakin through the Red Sea to the Nile Delta. Uthman Digna fled after the battle of Um Dibeikerat and lived in disguise at hide-outs in Goz Rajab; he later took refuge in the Warriiba mountains near the Red Sea, where a certain Muhammad Or betrayed him by disclosing his hiding place to the authorities. Eventually he was captured and sent via the Red Sea to Damietta.

At the beginning of the century, the most prominent of these prisoners\* were the sons of the Mahdi,† the sons of the Khalifa

\* My information is derived partly from Khartoum archives and partly from Sayed Omer Yaagub, nephew of the Khalifa, who spent some ten years in captivity at Wadi Halfa.

† These were Abdullahi, El Tahir, Nasr el Din and Ali. The four of them were sent to a special school in Rosetta and were treated kindly. After completing elementary education, they were engaged in minor employment in Egypt. Abdullahi and Nasr el Din died in Egypt and El Tahir died in Wadi Halfa on his way back home with his brother Ali, the only survivor of the four. Abd el Rahman, a boy of thirteen years at that time, was left with his mother in Omdurman.



Abdullahi,\* the sons of Khalifa Ali Wad Hilu,† and the sons of Emir Yaagub,‡ brother of the Khalifa, who were captured after the Khalifa's death in the battle of Um Dibeikerat. Other important *emirs* and personalities sent to the Delta prisons were Kunis Wad el Dikeim, Abd el Bagi, Abd el Wakil, Ibrahim Malik, Fadul Hassan, El Khatim Musa, Muhammad el Amin Yaagub, Khatir Himeidan, Ibrahim Makhayar, Ali el

\* There were eighteen of them, and they were divided into three categories, according to age. The able-bodied were given employment in government departments in Egypt, the young men were sent for training at the school of agriculture in Miet el Dieba, and the children were attached to Rosetta school, with the sons of the Mahdi. Uthman Sheikh el Din, the eldest son of the Khalifa, was detained in Rosetta prison and died, like Emir Mahmoud Wad Ahmed and others. Omer was employed in the Stores and Ordnance Department in Egypt, and on his return to the Sudan joined the Department of Finance, later being commissioned as an officer in the Sudan Defence Force. Abd el Samad, like Omer, worked in the Ordnance Department and on his return was appointed a *Sol* in the Sudan Defence Force. Yahya and his three brothers, Ismail, Ibrahim el Khalil and Hamza were attached to Miet el Dieba School. Ismail died in Egypt and Yahya and his two remaining brothers were employed by the Department of Agriculture on their return to the Sudan. Muhammad el Amin, El Tahir, Muhammad el Mahdi and Ali had all returned to the Sudan in 1908. Abd el Magied, Hassan, Abd el Rahim, Mohamed el Sayed, Suliman, Daud, Fadul and El Tayed, who were all small boys, were attached to the elementary school at Rosetta and sent back to Omdurman in 1908. Abd el Salaam, the youngest son, was a baby and so he was left with his mother at Omdurman.

† These numbered seven: Muhammad Ahmed was held in detention with others at the prison of Rosetta and was later deported to Wadi Halfa. Yaagub remained in prison at Rosetta and was released in 1908; on his return to the Sudan he was employed in the Department of Intelligence. Musa was sent to Miet el Dieba school and on his return in 1908 was employed in the Department of Agriculture. Ismail was kept in custody at Rosetta prison; on his release in 1908 he returned to the Sudan and settled in Kosti. Abdullahi, like Ismail, had settled in Kosti after his release from Rosetta prison in 1908. El Tayeb and Siddik were infants at that time and were sent back with their mothers after spending a short period in Rosetta.

‡ There were nine: Omer, Ali, Musa, Ahmed, Abd el Majid, Abd el Rahman, Hassan, Abdullahi, and Abdalla. All of them were sent to exile at Wadi Halfa – the last two followed the rest of their brothers after two years. They were all attached to the railway school in Wadi Halfa, except for Ahmed who was appointed as a clerk. In 1908 they were released from exile and sent to Atbara, where they were employed as railway workers.



Sheikh Saied and Emir Muhammad Zein. Less important ones were deported to Wadi Halfa after the conquest of the Sudan.\*

In 1904 Ali Abd el Karim, a cousin of the Mahdi, a millenarian whose mind was unbalanced, started to advocate certain principles not compatible with the Sharia law of Islam. He collected some followers and started to preach. His principles and theories were held to be dangerous, both for security and for the purity of religion, and consequently he was arrested, together with his followers, the most prominent of whom were Muhammad el Zaki, Awad Abu el Gasim and Saad el Eish. They were deported to Wadi Halfa. Ali Abd el Karim was placed in special custody in Fort No. 4, and not allowed to leave his cell.

The unfortunate convicts of the Delta prisons remained exposed to undeserved hardships up to 1908. On 22 March 1908 the convicts of Damietta prison petitioned the Intelligence Department and Slatin Pasha, then Inspector-General of the Sudan, requesting their immediate return home. They complained that the damp and sticky climate of the Delta had caused many deaths among them and considerably damaged the health of those who remained alive.†

In the same month, a leading British Liberal, H. N. Brailsford, visited the Delta prisons and interviewed Uthman Digna. The pathetic condition of the prisoners required no proof, and he expressed his displeasure to the British authorities at their treatment of the captives and requested that they should be fairly dealt with.

On his return to London, Mr. Brailsford wrote a critical article in his paper and submitted a report to the government. Soon afterwards the Egyptian press became interested, and articles appeared in *Al Ahram*, *Al Minbar*, *Al Liwa* and *Al Muayed*. The famous Hussein Heikal, the editor of *Al Siyasa*, the organ of the Egyptian Liberal Party, published a strongly-worded leading article entitled 'Mercy is above justice — Uthman Digna, the eternal prisoner'. Heikal stated that the deportees were not

\* These included Yaagub Abu Zeinab, Hilba el Mahsun, Ibrahim el Turgumawi, El Nur Gad Karim, Kor Nyidhok (the Mek of the Shilluk who assisted Ahmed Fadil to cross the White Nile and join the Khalifa after the battle of Kerreri), Emir Muhammad Mikhawi, Emir Ali Farfar, Emir Fadul Adam, Emir Isa Wad el Zein, Emir Mahmoud Sabil, Emir Ibrahim Ali, Emir Ismail Bushara, Emir Ibrahim Abu Duruk, Emir Bushara Khamis, Emir Isa Kashosh, Emir Bashir Abdalla, Emir Abd el Majid Hayam, Ahmed Dei el Nur and Muhammad Fadlalla.

† The Intelligence Department, evidently disturbed by those petitions, made enquiries. Eventually it was known that they were drafted in the handwriting of Muhammad Ahmed Ali Wad Hilu and that the two brothers of Amir Mahmud wad Ahmed had dictated the complaint, and were determined to send in petitions every two weeks.

criminals, but were the dignitaries of their own country; what they had done in no way exceeded the limits of the sacred right of defence against foreign invasion. He appealed to the British authorities for their immediate release and safe return home.

Brailsford's campaign and the high feeling it aroused in the Egyptian press frightened the British authorities in Cairo. After careful investigation it was decided to release the harmless prisoners, and to deport the dangerous ones to Wadi Halfa. Consequently the remaining two sons of the Mahdi, all the sons of the Khalifa and all the sons of Khalifa Ali wad Hilu, except Muhammad Ahmed, were released and allowed to return home. And to provide a place for the rest of the prisoners in Wadi Halfa, the sons of Emir Yaagub were released and sent to Atbara for employment. Other less important prisoners were released from both Damietta and Halfa. A decision was then taken to send the remaining prisoners from the Delta to Wadi Halfa. The last batch arrived on 13 April 1908, Uthman Digna following in December.

At the close of 1908, the remaining political prisoners\* at Wadi Halfa were divided according to their political importance, into groups. The first included the important leaders who were placed under special custody in Fort No. 4, and were only allowed to leave their cells once a day at noon. These were Uthman Digna and Ali Abd el Karim. Group B† were also kept in Fort No. 4, and were granted a piece of land east of the railway workshops to cultivate; they were forbidden to make any contact with the inhabitants. Group C‡ were the young captives, who

\* Now reduced to the following: Uthman Digna, Ali Abd el Karim, Ismail Ahmed with his wife Mastura, his son Muhammad and daughter Safiya; Muhammad el Mahdi Ahmed with his wife Safiya and daughters Halima, Fatma and Sakina; Ibrahim Malik, who was sixty years old, with his daughters Maarufa, Zahra and Fatma and his son Abbas; Abd el Bagi Abd el Wakil, who was sixty-five, with his wife Fatma, daughter Zahra and son Bagadi; Muhammad Ahmed el Helu, who was twenty-eight, with his Shilluk wife, Ata el Karim, sons Yaagub and Ali, and daughters Amna and Nur el Sham. The rest were Khatir Himeidan, Ali Farfar who was the agent of Zaki Tamal, Hilba el Mahsun, Ibrahim Malik, Ibrahim Makhayar, Yaagub Abu Zeinab, Yunis Wad el Dikeim, Ali el Sheikh Saied, Mohamed el Zaki, Ibrahim el Turgumawi, El Khatim Musa, Fadul el Hassan, Awad Abu el Gasim, Muhammad Fadlalla, Sharif Adam Abd el Rahman and the Shilluk Mek, Kor Nyidhok.

† Composed of the elderly Ansar like Mohamed el Zaki, Ibrahim el Turgumawi, El Khatim Musa, Hilba el Mahsun, Ali Farfar, Fadul el Hassan, Yunis Wad el Dikeim, Ibrahim Malik and Abd el Bagi Abd el Wakil.

‡ Included Ismail and Muhammad el Mahdi, the brothers of Mahmoud wad Ahmed, Muhammad Ahmed el Helu, Awad Abu el Gasim, Muhammad Fadlalla, Sharif Adam Abd el Rahman and Kor Nyidhok.

were put under light surveillance, which in most cases did not go beyond the limits of restricted residence. They lived in the Camel Corps lines and were allowed to move freely in town and establish business in the market. Some were employed in the railway workshops.

After the lapse of some years the Sudan Government changed their attitude towards these captives and decided to take positive steps to restore them to their normal position in the new Sudanese society. Those who had had agricultural training at the experimental farm in Miet el Dieba in Egypt were appointed to the Department of Agriculture, and many others were recruited as artisans in the railway workshops. A number of them were allowed to live under restricted residence at home in Omdurman, Wad Medani, Gedaref, Jabalein, Singa and Kosti. By December 1917 only four, whose release was held to be dangerous to security at that time, remained in Wadi Halfa. These were Uthman Digna, Ali Abd el Karim, Awad Abu el Gasim and Muhammad Ahmed el Helu. After a short period Awad Abu el Gasim and Muhammad Ahmed el Helu were allowed to leave Wadi Halfa and live under police supervision in their homes, leaving only Uthman Digna and Ali Abd el Karim, who were destined to remain in this town for life.

In 1923 Uthman Digna petitioned the authorities for permission to go on pilgrimage to Mecca, but his noble wish was denied and his appeal was summarily dismissed. The news leaked out. A Liberal M.P. asked a question in parliament about the dismissal of Uthman Digna's request to visit the Holy Land. The Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs denied that Uthman Digna had submitted such a request or expressed any such wish, and assured members that he was leading a calm and happy life in his exile. The liberal papers sharply criticized the untruthful reply and demanded that the matter should be carefully investigated and the injustice removed.

No doubt the press commentary embarrassed the British Government, and in 1924 Digna was reluctantly allowed to proceed to Mecca. On his return to Wadi Halfa he was allotted a small house next to the police station, where he spent the rest of his life, fasting all day, contented with a little food and a little milk and dates at night, and devoting all his time to prayer and reading the Koran until he passed away peacefully on the night of 17 December 1927. After a calm and quiet funeral procession he was buried in the cemetery of Sidi Ibrahim.

Thus ended the eventful life of one of the greatest heroes ever known in the history of the Sudan and one of the most courageous and daring fighters of the nineteenth century, the leader of the 'Fuzzy Wuzzies', the warrior who won five battles and defeated the Imperial troops at Tokar, Sinkat, Aldeb, Handub, Tamai and Khor Shambat. His heroism, valour and tact, attracted world-wide appreciation from historians, and Churchill gave him handsome praise.

After the death of Uthman Digna, Ali Abd el Karim was left alone, living with his family at El Geiger, cultivating his small piece of land and harvesting the yield of his date trees until he died in 1942.

In their captivity and seclusion, these gallant prisoners were kindly treated by the Nubian inhabitants, and those who were allowed to mix with the natives left behind many friends who still remember them kindly. Although the great history behind Uthman Digna was unknown to the common folk of Halfa town, yet he was generally held to be a saint, and many legends were woven around him.

## THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF NUBIA

The student of Sudanese history, ancient or modern, will note that nearly all major influences entered the country through the Nile in Nubia. A great role was played by this river in shaping the history of Nubia and of the Sudan as a whole. In ancient times the great Pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom sent their fleets upstream of the First Cataract, built their cities and temples along the banks of the river in Nubia and established their fortifications at the tails of the Second and Third Cataracts, thus extending the first civilization known to mankind in that region. After centuries of settled life, the Kushites advanced from the south, invaded Nubia, sacked her cities and pushed further north until they conquered Egypt. Then the Pharaohs' power revived and they regained the country they had lost.

At the dawn of Christianity, the first Christian fathers sailed all the way from Rosetta to Nubia, carrying the Bible and teaching the Gospel of Peace. They settled in the ruins of the ancient cities of the Pharaohs and built their churches on the remains of temples. Unlike the ancient Egyptians, the Christian fathers extended their domain further inside the Sudan, building their cities and churches until they reached 'Alwa', south of Khartoum, where they established their Christian capital. Then came the expansion of Islam in the middle of the eighth century\* when the Muslim Arabs, imbued with a fanatical faith in their new religion, pressed along the banks of the Nile from Egypt into Nubia. They found the relics of the dying Christian kingdom upon which they built their new Islamic civilization. Mosques were built beside the remains of churches, and at times churches were converted into mosques. Like their Christian predecessors, the Muslim Arabs pursued their way south and settled in the savannah belt, which offered good grazing for their camels.

In the nineteenth century, the Nile at Nubia was the main line of three invasions — those of Mohamed Ali Pasha and Ismail Pasha, and the reconquest in 1896. In spite of the urgent nature of the expedition to relieve General Gordon in 1884, no quicker route could be found

\* MacMichael, *A History of the Arabs in the Sudan*.

than the Nile. Nijumi too, in spite of his awareness of the concentration of the enemy's forces between Akasha and Halfa, could not deviate from the Nile on his way to conquer Egypt. In short, Nubia was the corridor through which all civilizations, religions and wars entered the country.

One of the predominant features of Nubia is its isolation. The region is remote, separated from the rest of the country by natural barriers. To the east and west it is cut off from the world by the boundless waste of the Sahara and to the south the inaccessible desert of the 'Atmur' stretches nearly 500 km. between Wadi Halfa and Abu Hamad. The river course to Dongola is blocked by three cataracts, the Second, Third and Fourth, the Third alone being a series of four minor cataracts, the Semna, Tangur, Dal and Kagbar. To the north Aswan is a 24 hours' journey by steamer from Wadi Halfa. Before the railway, Halfa reach was only accessible by three difficult roads. In the west Darb el Arbain, a camel track in the middle of the desert coming from the distant town of Dara, near Jebel Marra in Darfur Province, following distant pools and oases and crossing dry valleys and sand plains, was used by camel caravans, loaded perhaps, with ivory, ostrich feathers, wild game trophies and crude rubber extracted from the forests of Bahr el Ghazal, on their way to Aswan. These caravans coming and going, hundreds of camels at a time, normally had their last halt at Salima Oasis, before they struck on towards the Nile south of Wadi Halfa; and from there they followed the west bank road through Ballana and Eneiba to Daraw in Egypt. As this road was long and dry, its use was restricted to the winter season, when the weather was cool and the need for water at its lowest. To the south, contact with Berber was only possible by two roads. The first clung to the river bank and followed the great bends of the Nile all the way, passing by Koka, Dongola, Karima, and across the Manasir country to Abu Hamad and then Berber. The second was the famous short cut across the Atmur, which joined Korosko with Abu Hamad via the Murrat wells. This was the road taken by Gordon on his last journey to Khartoum, and was used by Ohrwalder in his flight. It is still used by the Ababda Arabs for smuggling goods and camels into Egypt.

Thus Nubia is a detached country, and the Nubians remained tied to their region, living in a world of their own. For this reason Nubia kept aloof and unresponsive to the great events in the Sudan in the nineteenth century.

### *The People*

Seligman, the famous anthropologist, stated in his *Races of Africa* that the Nubians belong to the Hamitic race of Africa. They are of the same

origin as the ancient Egyptians and the Beja tribes of the Eastern Sudan. It is not known for certain whence their ancestors came. A. J. Arkell and Professor Plumley are inclined to believe that they originally came from Punt in Somaliland. Leslie Greener stated, without solid evidence, that their culture was more Asiatic than anything else, and it was possible that they came from Asia across the Red Sea, via the port of Kosseir. Whatever the arguments, until scientific investigations prove otherwise, we must assume that they were Hamites.

Throughout their ancient history and during the Christian era, the Nubians preserved their Hamitic blood. When the main migration of the Arabs into the Sudan occurred in the middle of the eighth century,\* Nubia was the first territory to be affected. The Arabs had penetrated to the furthest limit of Nubia, mingled with the people and developed marriage ties with some of them. For the first time the Hamitic features of the Nubians had become mixed with Semitic blood and 'this is the sole reason', as Daud Kubara stated, 'for the presence (in the Sudan) of the Ashraf and the Arabs of Hejaz.'† No historical reference to the size of the Arab settlement in Nubia is available, but since the Arabs were nomadic and Nubia was dry, one can assume that their settlement was not as dense as in the savannah belt of the Sudan. This agrees with the traditional claim to pure Nubian descent, made by some existing Nubian families.

During the nineteenth century Turkish blood mingled with that of the Nubians. The Kushaf, who were minor officials appointed by the Turks to rule the villages, married Nubian girls, and their descendants are now known as the Kushaf. They were related on the maternal side to the Nubians who considered them as maternal brothers possessing full social rights and the right of possession of land and residence in the same village.

During the reign of Hammam Abu Yusuf an interesting incident occurred, which defined the Kushaf descent groups and their places of abode. Below is a summary of the story as related in the manuscript of the Nubian historian, Kubara:

Hammam was in the habit of selling the right to rule Nubia to anyone, against the payment of a certain sum of money. This system, which went on for a long time, had given rise to hot competition between the Kashifs. On this account the Kushaf tribes of Ibrim had joined together and formed an alliance. There were eight tribal sections, namely the Ibrimao, the Magarab, the Agha Hussein, the Sukkorab, the Kiekhiab, the Tubashia, the Hamdunab

\* MacMichael. *A History of the Arabs in the Sudan*.

† *El Dur el Farid fi el Akhbar el Mufieda*.

and the Kariab. They intended to wage war on the other four tribes, who were composed of four clans, namely the Daudab, the Dibabia, the Mandulab and the Azrihan.

When the four clans became aware of the intentions of their enemy, they moved south to El Dirr and prepared for battle. But before the fighting took place, some learned elders interfered and made a settlement between the conflicting parties on the following terms: the tribes of Ibrim were allotted six places to rule — namely Ibrim, Eneiba, Ganiba, Masmās and Toski, East and West. The four tribes had fifteen places to rule — namely Armana and Farayk, Ballana and Gustal, Adindan and Faras Island, Sarra East and Sarra West, Dibeira and Ashkeit, Argin and Dabarosa, Angash and Halfa Degheim. The settlement was reached and peace continued for a long time.

No one among the Halfa Nubians could confirm or deny the Kubara story of a feud. Although Kabura may be considered a remote contemporary of that age, I think the credibility of his account remains shaky and invites careful investigation.

<i>Turkish Nubians</i>	<i>Arabised Nubians</i>	<i>Pure Nubians</i>
Daudab	Guabra	Awlad Geir
Dababia	Hib Allab	Soi
Wiliab	Gararish	Dogma
Mandulab-Kiriab	Awlad Ork el Din	Ghardaga
Sukkorab	Awlad Asim	Dakin
Bizrganab	Abbasin	Nuria
Kikhiab		
Beiramab		
Magarab*		
Agha Hussein		
Shalabab		
Ibrimab		
Tubashia		
Hamdunab		
Kariab		
Hamadallab		

\* The Magarab present an interesting problem. They claim to have come in ancient times from 'El Magar' (Hungary) and settled on Magarab Island opposite to Degheim. It may be of interest to anthropologists to prove or disprove this allegation by scientific means, but to me, apart from the very few of them who have green eyes, there is nothing Hungarian or European about them. However they are included among the Turkish Nubians in the document of Sherif Daud.



As the years went by more Kashifs appeared in Nubia and more sections were added to the list of Kubara. Other Turks, known to the Nubians as Ghuz, left traces in Nubia. The Turkish Nubian section finally embraced the majority of the population of the inundated area.

The following table gives the tribal sections according to their origin. It is derived from a document bequeathed to Ahmed Sherif Daud by his father, who was the *omda* of Halfa town.

The Nubian sections and groups classified above do not normally tend to live separately from each other. They are all related to the same Nubian mother and feel that this maternal tie is strong enough to hold them together. At the same time they use no recrimination or discrimination against each other. Even the pure Nubians do not boast of their purity and there is a general feeling of equality. This is evident from the heterogeneous nature of the population of each village. Not a

<i>Name of Village</i>	<i>Tribal Sections</i>
Faras West	Daudab, Dababia
Faras East	Daudab, Mandulab and Guabra
Sarra West	Kushaf, Nuria, Dakin and Dogma
Sarra East	Daudab, Nuria and Dakin
Dibeira	Khalilab, Dababia, Mandulab, Wiliab and Guabra
Ashkeit	Dababia, Mandulab, Daudab and Guabra
Argin	Guabra are the majority, Daudab, Dababia Mandulab, Dkudab, Bizrganab, Kikhiab, Dogma and Dakin
Dabarosa	Guabra are the majority, Khalilab, and very few Daudab and Dababia
Angash	Bizrganab, Wiliab and Guabra
Degheim	The majority are Awlad Geir, Dogma, Soi, and Ghardaga, the rest are Wiliab, Kiekhaib, Magarab, Agha Hussein, Guabra and Hiballab Arabs Hussein, Guabra and Hiballab Arabs
Abka	Gararish Arabs and Wiliab
Gemai	Guabra and Bizrganab
Saras	Ork el Dinab and very few Dakin
Atiri	Shalabab, and Dakin
Dawashat	Awlad Asim and Awlad Yousif; but the majority are Dakin
Umbakol	Gararish (the descendants of Sayedna Aba Yazid Ibn el Awam el Gorashi)
Mak el Nasir	Abbasin
Sonki	Mandulab and Dakin
Akasha and Kulb	Ghuz, Wiliab; the majority are Awlad Sharif
Sarkamatto	Wiliab, Kiriab

single village is inhabited by one section of the Nubians only. The schedule, derived from the document of Sherif Daud, gives an idea of the fragmental sections living in every village in the inundated area. The information was tested with the elders of most of the villages concerned and found correct.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MODERN NUBIANS

### (i) *General Character*

In spite of the hardship and poverty of their area, the Nubians are among the most friendly tribes in the Sudan. They are generous and courteous to aliens and foreigners. Guests are treated hospitably and with consideration, and entertained with the best food and drink available. Even in poverty-stricken areas like Batn el Hajar, visitors are always impressed by the kindness of their reception by the people. To the Nubians a guest is a highly respected person and his entertainment is considered a social duty. The guest of one person in particular is essentially the guest of the whole village. Whenever the word '*Iskitti*' is heard the whole village contributes towards his comfort and entertainment. This generosity is genuine, and there is no guile or pretence about it. Once a guest enters a Nubian house he feels at home, with the charming faces of his hosts around him chatting and joking about life. Not only men, but also old ladies, in places where men are absent, show the same feeling and fulfil their social duties admirably. During my six years' stay in Nubia I could not fail to notice this unfailing habit. Very few Nubians are misers.

It is also a characteristic of the Nubians that they are clean. They sweep out their dwellings frequently and collect the rubbish in the proper place, where it is burnt; the roads to their villages are also clean. The clothes they wear are always washed, and their children are free from dirt. They are truly fond of cleanliness and domestic order. All their utensils and domestic articles are thoroughly washed, wiped and kept in the proper place. When Prince Sadr el Din Aga Khan visited Buhen in 1962, he declared a wish to visit a Nubian house. It happened that the house of one of the sailors of the boat in which we crossed the river lay in the village next to Buhen. When I told him of the intention of the great guest he was pleased, and welcomed the visit to his house. We entered each room in turn and left no corner unvisited, even the

kitchen. The visiting party could not hide their impressions about the high standard of cleanliness. We then dropped into two houses at random, and the result was the same.

The Nubians are also famous for their honesty and love of peace. They respect the right of property, and do not trespass or enter the property of others. They do not know stealing or fraud. It is normal for them to fit the wooden bolts to the main gates of their houses on the outside rather than the inside. Perhaps the real reason why dishonesty has not crept into their society is mainly that they are all related to each other, and no foreign element settled with them. The fact that each person does not go beyond the limits of his rights also counts. Side by side with this, it should be mentioned that, although some of them are evil-tongued and excitable, the Nubians do not resort to violence in fighting for what they consider their right. During my stay in Halfa the number of convicts in the district prison never exceeded a dozen, and the majority of those were Saidis, who had crossed the border from Egypt without obtaining the necessary entry documents. The Nubians had never been known as a warlike tribe. H. C. Jackson,\* in one of his despatches to Khartoum, wrote: 'Some years ago when they were enlisted in the Egyptian army, they burnt the stocks of their rifles to make fires for their cooking.' It is true that military service has little attraction for the Nubians.

Being peaceful and non-violent, the Nubians depend for almost everything on the Government. But on the other hand, they litigate, they petition and they complain. Perhaps they are the most litigious and cantankerous tribe in the whole Sudan, with the exception of the Berber and Bara people. They complain about anything and are fond of sending petitions about any subject. Whenever there is a complaint of a general nature, they beg the support of their fellow-citizens abroad, who have acquired the habit of sending countless long telegrams from Egypt and other parts of the Sudan. On my first visit to the Sukkot area, I observed as I approached Abri that there was a big gathering of men at the side of the road near Amara village, which I first mistook for a meeting occasioned by someone's death. To my surprise when my car got nearer I saw that the big mass of men were all signalling to us to stop, which I ordered the driver to do, and got out. A certain Khalil Osman, who was apparently the spokesman of the gathering, made a long speech criticising and scorning the *Omda*, and saying in strong terms how they were abused and ill-treated by him. At the end of his speech, Khalil demanded the *Omda's* dismissal. I tried to explain to them that I was new to the area and had to be given time to consider

\* Governor of Halfa in the late 1920s.

their complaints, but in the tumult very few heard me. Then I asked Khalil 'How long has the *Omda* been in office?' 'For twelve long years', he replied. Then I asked 'Why have you kept silent all this time?' In reply to this, he pulled a roll of papers out of his pocket which he handed to me. The roll, which was neatly tied with a white tape, contained six documents of two sheets each bearing the signatures and seal stamps of over a hundred names. They were folded chronologically. The first was a complaint to the British District Commissioner, dated seven years earlier, containing a defamatory criticism of the *Omda* and his father the Court President, demanding the removal of both. As the District Commissioner had apparently not dismissed him, the second was addressed to the Governor of the Northern Province on the same subject, but there were now three accused, including the District Commissioner himself. The third paper was submitted to the Civil Secretary, complaining about the unjust Governor, who had sided with his Commissioner. The fourth was sent to the Governor-General of the Sudan, with critical remarks on the administrative service. The fifth was addressed to the British Ambassador in Cairo, appealing for his intervention in the matter, and the last was sent to King Farouk, complaining about the British administration at large. When I finished reading those interesting documents I asked Khalil whether any justice had been done to him and his people at all, and he said regretfully, 'We got nothing, and the *Omda* is still enjoying his position, like a British colonizer.' Then I said, 'Why haven't you petitioned God Almighty?' When I returned from my journey, I found 223 telegrams awaiting me at Wadi Halfa. They were all sent by Amara citizens who were working in Egypt.

Another common quality of the Nubian is his deep sense of pride. When he is in private distress he does not show it, whatever the situation. If he is poor, one cannot sense it from him; he hides his misfortunes and appears as happy as anyone else. He never begs, and does not allow poverty to affect personal honour. However hungry and penniless he is, he bears it with patience and admirable resignation. Sometimes it is carried to the extreme, and a man will try to hide his trouble from his nearest relatives, who may be in a position to help. It is quite general that the Nubians do not like being faced with the facts, when the facts are disagreeable to them. They are very touchy about criticism, even when it is constructive and uttered in good faith. They are boastful too, and like to be praised.

Like all tribes in the Sudan, the Nubians have their faults. One Nubian would rarely oppose another, even if the other were in the wrong. Whether they are too polite with each other or too fearful, or a mixture of both, I cannot tell. At times it really goes beyond the limits

of courtesy. They are also extremists in their relations with each other. To one Nubian another Nubian is either his best friend or his sworn enemy. Friendship is apt to be sacrificed over the most trivial disagreements, and once relations are broken, enmity will have no limits. They seem to know one another's defects very well, which gives the extremist elements and the most pig-headed the chance to dominate. This is apparent whenever a public issue arises, when their tendency is to react negatively rather than positively. Whenever a decision is given that is contrary to their wishes, however just and equitable it may be, a general outcry and vociferous complaints always follow. But over good and favourable decisions, they are always passive and apathetic.

An outstanding aspect of the old Nubian society was the effect of the individual and group emigration of the middle-aged and able-bodied men from the country. Some analysis of the number of deserted wives, and families whose heads were absent, is given in a later chapter (see p. 338). The figure is really appalling. This state of affairs was not confined to Halfa District alone. Dongola seems to suffer as badly. But neither the Nubians nor the Danagla are to be blamed for this unhappy state of affairs. The cruelty of nature was chiefly responsible. Instead of staying with their families in a state of privation and poverty, these men had to go somewhere to look for work and secure a living for themselves and subsistence for their dear families, whom they were compelled to leave behind. Unfortunately the Nubians were attracted by remote enterprises; they knew they could sell their skills and craft in distant places like Cairo, and even as far away as England. This made it difficult for them to pay regular annual visits to their families, with the result that their wives had to suffer long periods of desertion and the poor children missed much-needed paternal supervision during their upbringing. Dr. Taha Baasher, the senior psychiatrist who paid a series of visits to the Nubian homes prior to the emigration, told me of the unhappy state of these deserted wives. Whenever he visited houses and asked the mothers about their condition, the normal reply was 'Well, everything is all right with us, except that the father of my children has been absent for . . . . . years'. Thus everything was far from being all right. In almost every case these families were left with an old brother-in-law or father-in-law, who gave them commodious sections of their houses. That is why the Nubian houses were so roomy and divided into quarters.

Being left to face life alone with her children, the Nubian mother had to shoulder all the domestic responsibilities of her husband. So women cultivated the small plots of land left by their husbands, and supervised the harvest. They saw that their bins were full of wheat and

that future supplies were assured. They pollinated the date trees in season, and harvested and marketed their produce. Moreover they maintained and repaired their houses and looked after the livestock. Our census figures show that the inundated area had more women engaged in agriculture than men; and when we listed the date trees for compensation purposes, we discovered that nearly every *samad* (senior cultivator in a tenancy) was female. It was also found that men scarcely knew where their own date trees stood.

Evidently Nubia had the best working women in the whole Sudan, and Nubian women play a considerable part in the social economy. They have a prominent place in society. The old women are strong, and show masculine endurance in their capacity to work hard. Some women are more famous and more respected than their menfolk. A notable example is Sitt Fatma Raya, the mother of Sayed Jamal Mohamed Ahmed, who is well known for her generosity and strength of character.

Women's dress in Nubia has an interesting style. Over their normal garments women wear a peculiar gown, made of thin-textured black cloth, which they call the *gargar*. It is a long loose garment with wide sleeves that dangle down to the ankles; it also has a tail at the back, which covers the ground behind the heels and erases their foot prints as it is dragged along. On their heads they put a black shawl of the same cloth, slightly folded around the neck, with its two ends hanging loosely over the shoulders, leaving only the face uncovered. No one knows the origin of this traditional dress, which made Nubian women famous. It is an effective disguise, making women of all ages look alike as they walk in groups along the road. The rising generation of Nubian girls are inclined to wear the ordinary Sudanese *tob* (sari worn in the Central Sudan) in preference to the *gargar*, and it is not in use in Sukkot and Mahas.

### (ii) *Nubian Death, Marriage and Birth Traditions\**

There was nothing peculiar about the Nubian traditions connected with death except that at the funerals of women, the *angareb* on which the body was carried to burial was shaded with arches of palm branches over which a red silk cloth, the *garmasis*, normally worn by women at weddings, was laid. The body was buried in accordance with the *Sunna* tradition, in which the head points south, while the face is turned towards Mecca. As in most parts of the Sudan, mourning continued for three days. Men usually sit in a big shed of wooden logs and wheat-stalk

\* The following facts were collected by me from old Nubian women; I have in places added my own personal observations.

mats, built specially for the occasion, which they called *hasira*, while women sat either on the terrace in front of the house or inside the rooms. On the third day a charitable offering, in the form of food or new cloth, was distributed to the poor. This ended the period of mourning.

As in all other parts of the Sudan, the relatives and friends of the bereaved contributed to the occasion, either by small cash payments or presents of sugar and coffee. In addition, every family head in the village contributed towards the feeding of guests by bringing his food tray at meal times.

When a boy reached eleven years of age, his relatives selected a girl for him as a suitable future wife. She was normally a cousin or near relative and she would be unofficially reserved for him. The couple grew up with the knowledge that they would be bound in marriage in the future. When they had grown up and become ready for marriage (normally at the age of twenty-one for the boy and at eighteen for the girl) the father or mother, or whoever was the head of the family, approached the girl's relatives and officially engaged her for marriage to his son. The betrothal was done quietly, without a celebration or any advance payment or present. The occasion was restricted to the engagement and the fixing of the wedding date. After the engagement, the girl would confine herself strictly to her house and was not allowed to show herself in the street.

In most cases the dowry (*mahar*) was paid in advance, but if the family of the bride were well off, the payment was made on the wedding day. Poor families would need it in advance, to enable them to meet their commitments for the marriage preparations, such as buying clothes for the bride, wet and dry perfumes, quantities of wheat and *dura*, and kitchen utensils. The *mahar* varied between a minimum of £S 20 and a maximum of £S 50, with £S 10 to be reserved in the marriage contract for payment in arrears. The relatives of the groom also made their preparations for the occasion, which included house furniture, some clothes for the bride, and a big banquet for which a bull calf was always slaughtered.

The 'henna' celebration always took place on the night before the wedding. A big dinner party was arranged for this occasion, for which a small bull was killed. All the relatives and friends of the groom were invited to his house and the food was served to them, as they sat on carpets or mats spread on the ground, according to the Nubian custom. After the feast was over, a red *birish*, which is a fine mat made of dyed wheat stalks and palm leaves, was laid on the ground. A big dish containing henna powder, mixed with water into paste, and small bowls



and bottles of Indian oils, were placed beside the *birish*. Then the place was flooded with girls and women coming in, all singing songs praising the forefathers of the groom. The groom, who by this time was dressed in light clothes was made to lie on the *birish*, and the henna ceremony was carried out by the old lady most closely related to him. At first she daubed the soles of his feet and fingers and palms with Indian oil, and then applied the henna paste over them. At this time all his unmarried friends took a small amount of the oil and henna and applied it to their fingers or palms for good luck.

A big dish half filled with water was placed near the groom, announcing the start of payment of monetary contributions (*nugta*). This was inaugurated by the groom's mother who dropped pieces of gold into the dish. She was followed by the relatives and friends of the groom who approached the dish one by one, counted out their contribution in front of the gathering and placed it near the dish, to a loud warbling from the women in the crowd. A near relative of the groom was nominated to observe the contributors and the amounts paid, which were listed afterwards and kept by the groom for future contributions at their weddings. After the *nugta* was over, the father and mother of the groom announced their gifts of land and date trees to their son. All the *nugta* contributions were then collected and handed over to the groom's mother, to assist her towards the marriage expenses.

After the henna formalities were completed, a big dance began. Certain professional or amateur singers were invited to lead the performance. Their musical instruments were lutes and violins for the modern singers, or drums of various sizes beaten together, like a kind of crude jazz, for the traditional Nubian singers. The drum was a light one, a round frame of wood over which a piece of sheep-skin was stretched tightly and which they called the *tar*. All the guests stood in a wide circle in the street, with the women all together. The singers stood by the central open space with the orchestra, while a team of ten men stood in a row at one end facing an equal number of girls standing at the other end. First music was played, while the main singer led a song such as

*Ya gami sillangi*  
*Oddiri sillangi*

which literally means 'Oh beautiful one, why do you go and leave me while I am sick?', which was one of the popular songs during my stay in Wadi Halfa, or any other song either in the Nubian dialect or in Arabic. When the song started the two rows approached each other with rhythmical steps, the girls swinging their bodies alternately to left and

right, while all present clapped their hands and echoed the refrain of the song in chorus. Women warbled at various intervals and men passed appreciative comments on the good dancers. There was also a closed dance in which two girls danced alone in the middle of the open space, while the music and songs went on.

There was always among the singers' party one who was authorised by them to receive the monetary contributions paid by the relatives and friends of the groom during the performance. Whenever he received a contribution from some individual, he shouted '*Dayman min fulan sadiég el aris*' ('we wish that such happy occasions will continue – we received from so-and-so, the friend of the groom, such-and-such amount'). These contributions were usually very generous, paid in silver coins which would later be divided among the members of the party, in addition to a further amount paid by the groom. The performance usually continued until dawn.

In the bride's house a dinner party was given, to which all the female relatives and friends of the bride were invited. A ram was killed for the occasion and the *henna* ceremony was performed, without dancing.

On the afternoon of the wedding day, the new furniture and the bride's clothes were taken from the house of the groom to that of the bride. They were received with warblings from the crowd of women who had gathered for this occasion.

After the evening prayer, all the male relatives and friends of the groom gathered in his house, and then went in procession to the bride's house for the conclusion of the marriage contract. The groom did not attend this occasion. The contract was concluded under the supervision of a Sharia court representative, who later wrote the document. When the formalities were complete, the nearest relative of the groom offered a present to the bride on his behalf, which in most cases was composed of a gold ornament worn by ladies of their foreheads, called *gussat el rahman*, a pair of silver wrist bands and a lace cloth containing pieces of gold. All this time the guests were offered dates.

During the performance of the marriage contract, in accordance with the Nubian tradition, seven women took a dish full of *fatta* – bread, soup, boiled rice and meat – and went to the river bank where they ate part of it and threw the rest into the water to feed the 'angels'. They then washed the dish and filled it with water and one of the ladies put her ring into it; they then carried it back carefully to the bride's house. When they arrived, they washed her face and head with the water and covered her with the *garmasis* cloth. They call this water *moyat el shihada*.

Then a dinner was served to the guests in the house of the bride, for which a bull calf was killed. The slaughter of this bull took place near

the door of the room in which the bride waited. She sat on a mattress laid on the ground covered with a red mat, and faced the spot where the bull was killed so that she could see the blood spurting from its throat. After that she was covered with the *garmasis*, over which a white calico sheet was stretched. Women usually made a high-pitched warbling sound to mark this occasion.

After dinner all the guests went straight to the house of the groom, to attend his adornment. When they arrived at his house, they were met with a warbling crowd of women; then the whole crowd moved to the open space of the house to attend the adorning. The ceremony proceeded as follows. The groom sat on a red *birish*, and beside him lay some wooden containers in which the different powders of sandalwood and *mahlab* were kept. The Indian oils and perfume were kept in small bowls. Amid the singing of women an old lady would anoint his head with the aromatic oils, then sprinkle the perfumed powder of sandalwood and *mahlab* over his head. This was called the *girtig*. Then, as a good omen, all his unmarried companions dipped their fingers in the sandalwood oil and smelled it. The groom was then dressed in new cloths and for the first time he wore the *ibaya*, a sort of loose woollen gown usually worn by married men, and in a big procession (*saira*) they all went to the bride's house. These processions were either led by a party of a religious sect reciting their religious poems for blessings, or by a party of singers. In the latter case the singers went in front and the women at the rear with the groom. Whenever the bride's house was in the same village or a nearby village, the procession normally went on foot, stopping at short intervals, when they placed three light chairs for the groom and his two viziers, one of whom was his own younger brother and the other a close unmarried friend. They stayed for a while looking at the dancing girls, then resumed their walk, stopping again and again. If the bride's house was in a distant village or across the river, buses or native boats were used to transport the procession.

On their arrival at the gate of the bride's house, the groom was offered a bowl containing milk mixed with sugar and butter out of which he drank seven sips and offered the rest to his viziers and friends to drink to his good luck. Then he was offered a small pot containing smoking sandalwood, bitter gum and alum on embers (*mubkhar*). He held it over his head and put it down seven times. Then the groom was led alone by a lady called the *wazira*, i.e. attendant of the bride, to enter the room of the bride and touch her forehead: this was called *lams el gussa*. After it he made a short prayer to God and went out to the crowd to receive their congratulations. By that time the dinner feast would be ready, after which dancing continued, as described earlier, until dawn.

At dawn the bride and groom, accompanied by their relatives and friends, walked to the river bank, where they washed their faces direct from the Nile and sprinkled water on each other. The whole party, including the bride and groom, then moved to the nearest groves of palm trees and cut off some branches. On their way home, the young men beat the groom lightly with the palm branches. When they arrived at the house they were offered tea and breakfast.

At noon the groom entered his room carrying a small box full of coins and sweets. After he had been there a short while, the bride was brought to the room, covered with the *garmasis*, by a party of women singing and warbling. The bride carried a small quantity of grilled millet *galiyia* at the edge of the *garmasis* cover. At the moment of her entry, the groom opened his treasure of coins and sweets and sprinkled its contents on her head, and in return she showered him with grilled corn. The girls and children then broke in confusion, collecting the scattered coins and sweets, which was their traditional loot.

After this performance was all over the attendants went out of the room, leaving the couple alone. The groom then bargained with his bride in order to make her speak to him: the longer she kept silent, the more the groom increased his payment, till he reached the sum previously agreed between the bride and her mother, then she spoke to him. This was called *fathat el khashm*, literally 'the opening of the mouth'. Sometimes the payment took the form of a gift such as a watch or a gold wrist-band, but the monetary payment in most cases did not exceed £S 5. In the evening the groom went out to the guests and attended a dance, which continued till midnight. Then the groom entered his room and stayed with his bride till morning.

At the dawn of the second day of the wedding, the mother of the groom slaughtered rams in her house and prepared large quantities of food, which she carried in pans, with baskets of bread and *kabida* and a bowl full of milk, to the house of the bride. On her arrival the groom would take seven sips of the milk, then dip his right hand into the bowl and offer it to the bride, who sipped out of it seven times. When this was done, the mother of the groom offered her son a present of raw gold.

On the third day, the bride's mother offered a dinner party to the relatives and friends of the groom. The bill of fare for this feast had to include young roast pigeons.

The wedding continued for seven days, and on each day the *bakhur* was placed at the doorstep of the bride's room, over which the groom stepped seven times each morning and evening. On the final day a big lunch invitation was prepared by the groom's mother in the house of the bride to which she invited all her female relatives and friends. Normally the party of invitees collected in her house, and from there

went to the bride's house where the banquet was prepared for them. In accordance with the Nubian tradition, every woman invited brought with her a present of wheat or millet, either raw or ground, carried on a mat tray. Some women brought monetary contributions. On leaving her own house, the groom's mother took with her a big basket full of groundnuts, sweets, bottles of syrup, sugar and tea, and the whole party walked with their loads to the bride's house. On their arrival there, the party were offered syrup, tea and groundnuts, then they enjoyed their luncheon feast. After the meal was over, each guest handed over her present to the groom's mother. These were poured into special containers and in return small quantities of ground nuts or *abri* (which is made of broken thin layers of baked fermented *dura* mixed with spices) were put on the trays and handed back to their owners. At this time the groom would be sitting in the room, holding a book in which all these presents were listed. The monetary presents usually started with his own mother, who made her present in the name of her younger unmarried son, and the rest followed suit, offering their presents in the names of their unmarried sons or daughters. Childless women offered their contributions in the names of their husbands. When this was finished, the groom's mother collected all these contributions as her due right and kept her book for repayment to the contributors when their turn came.

In the evening, the groom visited his mother in her house, accompanied by a lavish present of food from the bride's mother. On his arrival his mother scattered a small quantity of corn over him, praying to God to preserve his life and grant him good and useful children. Then she presented him with a piece of gold.

The same afternoon, the bride was led by a party of girls to the kitchen where she would be made to bake seven pieces of *kabida* on a hot flat iron oven. These were sprayed with sugar powder and taken to seven girls (who must be in their first marriage), invited to eat with the bride. Each of them had to eat seven mouthfuls, after which they were offered presents of perfumes.

The seventh day ended the wedding ceremonies, after which the couple assumed their new life as husband and wife.

Nobody could say for certain when these traditions had been started. Whether they were inherited from the ancient Egyptians, the Christian era or Islam I cannot say. Yet the explanation of some of their aspects is very clear to me. Milk, for instance, is held by the majority of tribes in the Sudan as a symbol of peace and as a good omen. Corn is a sign of prosperity, and the bitter gum and alum which are smoked with sandalwood in the *bakhur* are meant to keep away the evil eye.

The large quantity of presents and contributions, established by Nubian tradition as a social duty, was a striking feature. This signified the importance of marriage in their social life, and everybody related was expected to pay his share. The mere fact that nearly every Nubian lady kept a list of those who contributed at her son's marriage means that she would be careful about repayment, perhaps on a more generous scale, to the contributors on future similar occasions. Instead of leaving the burden of the marriage expenses entirely on the shoulders of the groom, the whole community contributed towards it, and these contributions were traditionally considered a social debt. This eased the financial problems of marriage and helped pave the way for men to enter marriage unions. That is why the Nubian men marry at a young age.

After delivering a child, the midwife was offered a gift of sweets, syrup and a quantity of wheat or millet in addition to a present of money, which in most cases did not exceed £S 2.

The child was named on the seventh day. A big dinner party was prepared for the occasion if the child was male, or lunch for a female child. For the first male child the party was always especially large, with dancing at night. Sometimes on the first Friday of his child's life, the father prepared a big lunch party of *fatta*, which he carried to the mosque after the noon prayer, and it was enjoyed there by all the mosque attendants. The first male child bore the name of his paternal grandfather and the first female was named after her paternal grandmother.

The popular male names among the Nubians are Daud, Khalil, Abd el Rahman and Dahab. The last of these is strictly a Nubian monopoly, exactly like the name Satti among the Danagla.

On the seventh day a party of women carried the new-born child to the river with a big dish full of *fatta* out of which they ate, and then threw the rest into the river to feed the 'angels'. Then the *mubkhar* (a small container full of antimony powder) was set smoking, and a certain woman would carry the child and step over it seven times. When this was finished, they threw all the clothes used by the baby during his first week of life into the river and filled a pail with river water, bringing it back with the child to his mother in the house. The mother would meet them at the gate, and wash her face with river water. She then prepared a mat tray containing a *rubaa* of corn and dates, over which the child was placed. The mother then held her child by the hands and another woman by its feet and they raised him gently over the tray then placed him down over the corn and dates shouting '*Mashangette - Mashangetta*', which is a Nubian phrase that has lost its meaning. They swung him seven times and finally laid him down on the

tray. The mother took a mouthful of the river water and after swirling it over the child, said 'My child is safe.'

On the fourteenth day a boiled mixture of grains was distributed to the neighbours and guests. The mother and her child wore new clothes and the room was smoked with *bakhur*. Then some women brought branches of date palms with which they swept out the four corners of the room, calling upon the angels of the Merciful to accompany them to the river: '*Ya malaykat el Rahman gumu nunzil el bahar.*' They then carried the corner dust, a quantity of the mixed boiled corn, the *mubkhar* and a piece of onion with which they wet the antimony, and went to the river in procession with the mother and child. At the river bank, they set down the *mubkhar* and this time the mother, carrying her child, stepped over it seven times. They then threw all the articles they had brought from the house into the water and returned home.

The reader may notice the role played by the 'angels' in the marriage and birth ceremonies of the Nubians. It signifies their reliance on religion for protection against evil. However, it would be wrong to suggest that the 'angels' have no duty other than attending Nubian celebrations.

### (iii) Other Aspects

It is generally observed that the Nubians, when in other parts of the Sudan, do not freely mix with other Sudanese. Wherever they go they tend to cling together and live in detached communities. Although there are some exceptions, such as the late Dr Mohamed Ahmed Ali, Mohamed Khalil Biteik and some others with many non-Nubian friends, the rest mostly confined themselves to their own Nubian society. This social exclusiveness has aroused much speculation, but I think it is mainly attributable to their being born and bred in an isolated country which has no neighbours to interact with, so that they knew nobody except their own brothers with whom they were brought up. In addition, the Nubians never marry their girls to non-Nubian men, though they have no objection to their men marrying non-Nubian girls. I cannot say whether their objection is motivated by their keenness to preserve the purity of blood of the Nubian mother or whether it is out of sheer tribal prejudice. Evidently if the latter is the case, the Nubians are not exceptional; until very recently, nearly all the tribes of the Northern Sudan shared this bias, and used to dismiss and disapprove of marriages between alien men and their own girls, on the grounds that all other tribes were inferior to their own. This predisposition has now died down in most tribes, yet there are still some tribes who, like the Nubians, stick to their disagreeable attitude.

The Nubians are commonly called in the Sudan and Egypt 'the

Barabra', or Berberines. In fact they have nothing to do with the Berbers and Moors of North Africa; at the same time there is nothing barbaric about them. Nobody can say for certain how and when the name originated. The Nubians deny that they gave their tribe this name themselves, nor did early travellers ever apply such a name to the Nubians. The first time in history the words Barbari and Barabra appeared was during the Turkish rule. Slatin and Ohrwalder mentioned the words in their books, with a loose meaning which covered the Rubatab as well. Probably the name was derived from the town of Berber, which was the most prominent trade centre in the Sudan during the Turkiya, and was better known to the Egyptians than Khartoum. To the Sudanese of those days anybody coming from the north was held to belong to Berber, and so was called a Barbari. Until very recently the inhabitants of Berber were called the Barabra in the various parts of the Sudan. In Egypt, the Sudanese at large are still called the Barabra.

#### *(iv) Domestic Service*

For generations the Nubians have found their métier in domestic service. They regard it as their unrivalled traditional profession and they are the only tribe of the Sudan that is proficient in it. Although domestic service is not very popular in other parts of the country, yet the Nubians are proud of it. Leslie Greener debated whether it was because they were servants that they were clean or whether it was due to their cleanliness that they were recruited as servants. Personally I think that to be a good servant is not easy. A servant must have other qualities to fit him for domestic duties. Besides his sense of cleanliness he must be honest, trustworthy, a master of his trade, and he must have a certain degree of tact, to enable him to adapt himself to his master. The Nubians have all these qualities. There is no record to show when the Nubians adopted this profession, but it seems that the dynasty of Mohamed Ali were the first discoverers of the Nubian servant. The Turkish Khedives, having no trust in the Egyptians and being constantly threatened by conspiracies and intrigues, found in the honest and loyal Nubian the ideal servant, who could be trusted to enter the private rooms of their palaces, to know their family secrets, and to prepare healthy and delicious food for their lavish tables. Sukkot men were the pioneer servants in the Abdin Palace. They proved their worth and encouraged more of their own tribal section to find jobs in the houses of the princes and pashas of Cairo. The British officials followed the lead of the pashas, and within a short time the Nubians had invaded all the kitchens and pantries of the important residences in Cairo. Egypt was corrupt at that time, and through their connection with the highest men in the government, they could obtain privileges. It was a great age



when all the ambitions of the Nubian men were directed to Cairo. They were attracted by the high life and the glitter of the sumptuous banquets in the fine mansions of Egypt. When King Fuad succeeded to the throne, he did not forget to bring his devoted valet Idris Osman Ali of Sukkot, with him into the Abdin Palace. Idris seems to have been a rare fellow, who won the respect and admiration of his master and climbed to importance. He was considered the head servant in the palace, and to give him more distinction he was granted the title of Bey. He was the only servant to be Bey in the whole history of Egypt. Idris was careful to strengthen the position of his fellow-countrymen in the palace, and appointed Suliman Abu el Gasim as his assistant. When Idris died, Suliman succeeded him and continued in royal service until Farouk's reign. On his death his place was taken by Muhammad Hassan Suleimani, who served his master faithfully until the *coup d'état* in 1952.

These great servants gave considerable service to their royal masters. They assumed high positions, and fulfilled their duties admirably. In 1955, when I visited Alexandria, I had a look inside El Montazah Palace. The attendants were still Sukkot men. One of them kindly conducted me through the lavish rooms, and did not fail to show me the office which had been occupied by Suleimani. It was next door to the king's, well furnished with a table of fine *oro* wood beside which five telephones rested on a shelf. The room also contained six shiny leather armchairs, on the floor was an expensive Persian carpet, and the walls were decorated with beautiful paintings. 'Nobody could have audience with the king, before paying his respects to Suleimani', said my Nubian conductor. 'Even ministers, at times, used to rely on his personal influence to have their difficulties with the Crown resolved.' In the royal residence at El Haram I was amazed to see that Suleimani had a well-appointed special wing for his personal use. Both Fuad and Farouk knew where to place their trust, and in fact their servants never betrayed them. Muhammad Hassan Suleimani, the only one of the famous three still living, experienced the hardship of the change-over, and although he had intimate knowledge of all the ins and outs of the deposed king's life and what he knew might have fetched a high price from the world's press, he nevertheless remained absolutely silent. A devoted servant cannot be more faithful.

Egypt never showed a better face to the Nubians than during the reigns of Fuad and Farouk. Encouraged and supported by the private attendants of the Crown and the servants of high officials, Nubian men could easily find well-paid jobs. Eventually there was a continuous drift of young men from Nubia to Abdin Square in Cairo. Meanwhile the fortunes they secured were reflected in various localities of Nubia, and the Sukkot area in particular. Fine houses were built, and modern

furniture found its way up the Nile to equip the rooms. Signs of wealth started to appear in one way or another. Suliman Abu el Gasim used his influence to induce the Egyptian Government to build a mosque in his home village. The father of one of the other servants became prominent and wealthy and used to spray his donkey with *eau de cologne* when he took it for a ride through the village. One of my Nubian friends told me how they used to look forward to the leave of those servants as a great occasion. They would return to Nubia with their bags full of gifts from Fuad Street and distribute presents to all their relatives. Another friend from a rich family told me that when he was a pupil in the Halfa school, the master asked him one day about his ambition in life, and his immediate answer was, 'To be a servant.' There was no wonder about this if one realises that in those days mothers rocking their babies or holding them in their arms used to sing to them '*Tabgi kabira, hadam Basha, hadamt el Mudira, kursi fi sulba, kumsha fi ida*' (May you grow up to become the servant of the Pasha or the Governor, with a chair for your seat and a ladle in your hand).

When the reconquest of the Sudan was complete and the British administration had settled in, all the British staff relied on the Nubians for domestic work. The majority of them got on very well and never changed masters. Some of them, who grew very old in service, were so dear to their employers that they secured pensions. One of the routine files which used to come to my office, every first week of the month, was the pensions file, containing many cheques from old British officials — pension instalments due to their old servants. When the British officials left the country, they paid their servants good gratuities which they invested in some way. Most of them were absorbed in the expansion of the Hotels and Catering Department, while others took up private enterprise, running their own restaurants in various towns of the Sudan.

It seems that Sukkot men could only be contented with service in Abdin, and left Khartoum Palace for Halfa men. Besides Ahmed el Hag, of the Sukkot area, who was Kitchener's head cook, and was recently still living in Ginnis, all the rest were from Halfa reach.\*

\* Isa Muhammad Nur was the first head waiter in Khartoum Palace. When Wingate became Governor-General, Muhammad Khalil Shorbaji succeeded Muhammad Nur, with Sadik Ramadan as his assistant; Hussein Sherif was the valet. Ahmed Kubara was the Palace laundryman. Daud Khalil, the valet of President Abboud, entered the Palace as a small lad in 1911, attending Lady Wingate and carrying her umbrella and handbag. When he grew up he was promoted to *sufragi* (butler), and in 1927 he became head butler. On the independence of the Sudan he was appointed valet to the President and remained in Palace service until his death in 1967.

However, the reader should not be led to believe that the Nubians are a tribe of servants. Although this trade was common, the Nubians touched other sides of life as well. The standard of their education is very high compared with that in other parts of the Sudan, and there is a big Nubian community employed in the various government departments as civil servants, some of whom, like Sayed Ibrahim Ahmed, Daud Abd el Latif and Mohamed Khalil Biteik, have attained high rank. A famous Nubian doctor was Dr Mohamed Ahmed Ali, whose humanitarian feeling towards the poor sick made him respected and loved by all Sudanese. In politics they had their own leaders, who had established good reputations and showed courage and enthusiasm over the destiny of the Sudan during the liberation campaign. Sayed Ibrahim Ahmed, one of the most prominent personalities in the whole country, who played a considerable role in the promotion of higher education in the Sudan, was one of the leaders who promoted the independence movement in the Sudan. Mohamed Nur el Din, at the opposite pole from Ibrahim Ahmed, was also celebrated as leader of the political party which stood for unity with Egypt. In the field of private business, Mahjub Mohamed Ahmed and the sons of Abd el Ghani were among the leading Sudanese merchants in Khartoum.

Until recently the common Nubian's knowledge of the Sudan in general was very scanty. When I first came to Wadi Halfa I was surprised to find that the Nubians were calling us Sudanese, and they talk about the railway express coming from Khartoum as 'the Sudan train'. The overwhelming majority of them had not seen the Sudan at all and they thought that the rest of the country contained only negroid, savage, inferior people. This should not be taken to mean that they considered themselves Egyptians, although a very big portion of them had seen Cairo many times, and had a better knowledge of Egypt than of their mother-country. This was, first, because the city lights of Cairo were far more attractive and inviting for a holiday than Khartoum; secondly, and more important, the presence of their relatives working in Cairo would make their stay there easier; and thirdly, life was cheaper in Egypt than in the Sudan. In the meantime their contact with the Egyptians affected their manners. They speak Arabic with a slight Egyptian accent and their greetings are full of the courteous verbosity for which the Egyptians are famous. Their rich men and notables wear Saidi *jibbas*, and in their houses coffee is served in the Turkish *kanaka*, as the traditional *jabana* pot is unknown to them. Their definition of directions is typically Egyptian: they call the north *bahri* and south *gabri*; and they are the only community in the Sudan who are in the habit of smoking the hookah, *shisha*. It was only when the question of their resettlement arose and we sent deputations from Nubia to visit the

proposed resettlement areas, that they started to realise that their mother Sudan contained equally proud and respectable tribes and that its virgin land was full of good possibilities.

*(v) Their Dialect*

The Nubians have their own dialect which is composed of a few hundred old Nubian words sandwiched between many corrupt Arabic words. It is the only medium of understanding among old women, though men and the young generation speak Arabic as well. Generally it is dying out under the influence of Arabic, and some of its expressions and original words are not in use. An interesting feature is the peculiar way in which the Nubians pronounce the letter D. Instead of the normal flat sound, the Nubians utter it by slightly pressing the tip of the tongue against the inner gums of the upper foreteeth and letting it come out with a faint echo. Like most dialect-speaking tribes, the Nubians speak Arabic with the gender inverted and so their classification of sex is always erroneous.

## THE NUBIAN LAND ECONOMY

In this short survey, I shall confine my notes and observations to the economic life of the Nubians of the Northern part of Wadi Halfa District, i.e. the area inundated by the reservoir of the High Dam. It also applies to the Sukkot and Mahas sections, which occupy the area along the Nile between Dal Cataract and Dongola District.

Unlike their ancient history, which has been thoroughly studied, little has been recorded in English about the social and economic aspects of the existing Nubian tribes. This, perhaps, is partly because the countless ancient Egyptian remains in the locality are more attractive to visitors than the cultural life of the inhabitants. The famous travellers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries mentioned only random details which they came across in passing through Nubia. The British administrators, for all their interest in the tribal life of the Sudan, gave little attention to contemporary Nubians: they were so deeply absorbed in the past that they could see nothing of interest in the present. *Sudan Notes and Records*, with its many articles on tribal life, contains only one article, by Sayed Ibrahim Ahmed, on the unique decoration of Nubian house-gates with china saucers. What follows is based on first-hand information, which I collected from the local inhabitants, and on personal observations made during my six years' stay in Wadi Halfa District.

The District covers an area of 180,690 square km., extending from Lat.22° to Lat.24°. However, the inhabited area is confined to two narrow strips along the river, and the rest is empty rainless desert. In the middle of the District, the Sahara plain slopes gently from east and west creating a narrow valley, through which the Nile waters flow, from the remote lakes of Central Africa and Lake Tana in Ethiopia, down to Egypt. Anyone who lives in the waterless Nubian desert cannot fail to realise how vital the river Nile is to the life of the inhabitants. It is the only source of irrigation for the cultivation of food and fodder crops; and it is the only line of communication.

The scarcity of cultivable land is an outstanding feature of Nubia. The silt belt is confined to the banks of the river and in most cases

extends no further than a few yards from the water. In some places, like Batn el Hajar ('belly of stone'), there is hardly any soil at all. The whole area is covered with rocky hills and dry sandy valleys. The river banks, like their hinterland, are either solid crags or sand beaches. The rocky islands of Semna Cataract appear absolutely bare and smooth, except for occasional acacia shrubs sticking to the top of the rocks. Soil scarcity is the most conspicuous feature of the stony area of Batn el Hajar. The houses are distinctive: the walls are built of layers of crude sandstone, without mortar.

Recent excavations of ancient sites indicate that in the past Nubia had more land, and that the west bank was rich in cultivable land and had a greater population than the east bank. At Faras West, ancient remains were found seven miles away from the river. Aksha, Dibeira West and Buhen, the remains of which were found deeply buried in sand, were in fact built on wide patches of fertile river silt. This shows that throughout the centuries, the strong north wind blew a colossal amount of sand from the desert and deposited it on the fertile plain along the river, turning the whole fertile belt into mounds and dunes of sand. The Nile too played its part in the shrinking of Nubia. During flood time when the head of water is high and the current strong, the river tends to widen its course, at the expense of valuable riverside soil.

Before the Aswan dam was built in 1902, Lower Nubia had plenty of *juruf* land (see p. 99), low fertile islands, and date trees. When the dam was completed and the storage of the reservoir began, most of the low-lying cultivable lands were submerged. In 1912 the dam was heightened and the level of the reservoir raised, with dire results to the remaining low land and many of the date trees. In 1932 the dam was heightened for the second time with even more disastrous effects. Kunuz country in Lower Nubia was completely devastated; the inhabitants lost their villages, their land and all their dates. They obstinately refused the invitation of the Egyptian Government to resettle north of Aswan, but preferred to rebuild their villages on the hilltops and live near their submerged country. All their able-bodied men deserted the place and went to Cairo or the Sudan searching for work and hoping to send financial help to their families. Some Kunuz families finally settled in Khartoum North and Shendi. In Sudanese Nubia, the second heightening of the dam affected an extensive area of *juruf* and low islands; the loss of date palm trees, however, was small.

The above account shows how the encroachment of the desert on the west belt, the erosion of the banks and islands by the flood, and the building and two heightenings of the Aswan dam, gradually deprived Nubia of its most valuable land, and seriously reduced its main economic asset. The potential of the land fell below the margin of vital

subsistence of the population, whose number was steadily increasing. Having no alternative economic resource to keep them at home, most of the young and able-bodied men had to emigrate in search of a living.

Land was very expensive in Nubia and the Nubian community was in a chronic state of land hunger. A single *feddan*\* of *karu* land fetched as much as £S 250. Land ownership was invariably registered in the form of estates of which the original owners died generations ago. Down the ages, heirs multiplied and the estates became so subdivided that the shares, if properly distributed today among the living heirs, would be tiny. When we carried out such a division for compensation purposes, we discovered that our calculating machines were actually working in fractions. My land clerk informed me that when he calculated his own share, it came to only half a square metre of land; the smallest share in the whole inundated area was as little as .0004 of a *feddan*. The sizes were far below the margin allowed by law for land unit registration. For this reason the Nubians were very keen not to disturb the register and preferred to have their land holdings undefined and their shares undivided. They were happy to live as co-owners and utilize their land in a communal form of economy. Absentees normally transferred their rights in land to the closest kin whom they had left behind. Emigrant fathers, of course, left their plots to their wives and children. Generally, land benefits were enjoyed by those who lived in the Nubian country.

Realising the narrow limits of their land, the Nubians had to apply a straight agricultural economy – i.e. cultivating rotations without leaving any fallow – to get the best and biggest crops. They tapped and laboured the productivity of the soil so carefully that they never left an inch of fallow land in their three successive rotations. As long as organic and chemical fertilizers were regularly applied, the soil would not become barren, and a good crop was assured. Cultivable land in Nubia was always green. The soil itself was encouraging and invited use, being a Nile clay deposit of very light texture which was easy to cultivate.

### (i) *The Agricultural Cycle*

The Nubian agricultural cycle involved three working seasons; the winter crop (*shitwi*), the summer crop (*seifi*), and the flood cultivation (*dameira*).

Of these, the winter rotation was the most important in the agricultural life of the Nubians. In it the main subsistence crops were sown, in addition to some cash products. The season started in

\* 1 feddan = 4,200 square metres.

mid-October, when men, women and children were all out in the field, engaged in clearing the weeds and uprooting the left-overs of the previous crop. They normally used the type of hoe called *kard* for this purpose; sometimes they used simpler implements, and at times when the soil was loose, their bare hands. This clearing activity took about a week or ten days, after which the plots were given a light watering, to soften the soil and prepare it for easy ploughing. After a week, before the land could get dry and hard, ploughing started. It should be noted that the common Nubian was not sophisticated in modern agriculture, and as his plot was small and narrow, the blessings of agricultural machinery were not needed. He stuck hard and fast to the use of the primitive plough of the Egyptian *fellah*, which consisted of a blade projecting downwards at one end, and a long pole attached to the blade which went to the front and was tied to the back of an ox at the other end. The machine was operated by pressing the blade deep into the soil at the rear, while the bull staggered forward pulling it through. Ploughing normally took a week, after which the land was left exposed for the sun to dry it and break up the hard lumps of soil. When all this was done, the sowing started in mid-November. This was entirely the responsibility of the women, who carried varieties of seeds in dishes and bowls from which they took handfuls and scattered them over the rough dry soil. Nubian women were very skilful and well trained in this, knowing how to scatter the right amount of seeds in a particular area. Crops sown in this rotation were wheat, barley, peas, lentils, chickpeas, potatoes, onions, beans and other vegetables. As soon as the sowing was finished, the Nubians started levelling the land. This was done to cover the seeds with a thin layer of soil, break the hard bits of soil and prepare the area for easy irrigation. For this purpose they applied a home-made grader, consisting of a heavy wooden sleeper drawn by two bulls, each end tied with a rope, while two men stood on it to give it more weight, keeping their balance while the heavy beam was dragged along. When all the soil was levelled out, the Nubians divided the area into beds, by raising small ridges of earth with a wooden implement called a *wasug*, resembling a flat-edged shovel, usually worked by two men. For similar minor work they also used a small device called an *erbel*.

By this time the fields were ready for watering and the bulls were driven to attend their major duties of driving the *sagiya*, or waterwheel. In the meantime all waterwheels were adequately maintained. The *alases* were thoroughly inspected and lengthened and more buckets (*feishe*) were added as the river level started to drop. Wind-breakers were built around the *sagiya* to protect the stream of water falling from the buckets into troughs against any diversion or splash caused by the





5. A *sagiya*

strong cold wind which always begins to blow at the end of October. Although there are a few modern motor pumps fitted to some cultivations, the majority of Nubian land relied on the *sagiya* – an ancient irrigation device dating back to the time of the Pharaohs.\*

The first watering took place the first week of December. Within five days the seeds had started to germinate and a few days later the shoots

\* This crude irrigation device, which is in common use throughout the northern provinces of the Sudan, is originally Nubian, and most of its parts still have Nubian names, which are used throughout the Sudan. It consists of two major parts, the main body and the side wheels. The main body, or central block, is composed of a vertical axle with a spindle fitted horizontally half way between the ground pivot and the fulcrum hole at the top, which was hollowed out of an aerial crossbeam, which was supported by two forked wooden columns. The side body is constructed of a strong wooden axis to which a wooden geared wheel was fixed vertically, fitted to the spindle of the central column; to this axis is also fixed a broad spoked wheel, partly sunk in the water, with a double lace rope (*alas*) attached to its rims, on which water buckets are tied at equal intervals. Bulls, yoked to the spindle, move in a circle around the spindle, which in turn drives the gears of the vertical side wheel, thus pushing the empty buckets into the water surface for a refill and up they go with a full load which they empty into a trough which carries the water off where it is wanted.

were well above ground level and the whole scene was beautifully green. By this time all the fields were well attended by female workers in their black dresses carrying light sickles, uprooting the intruding weeds and clearing the soil for the healthy growth of their crops. Light grass was pulled out with the bare hands. Before the third watering, chemical fertilisers were applied to the soil. The Nubians had their own method of spreading these chemicals. They wrapped enough of the salt to make two pints in a napkin or rag and tied it in the middle course of the *sagiya* trough. The salt dissolved gradually as the water passed to the main channel and off to the cultivation beds. Organic fertilizers were in use on a limited scale. Animal dung as well as night soil were very popular manures for vegetables and produced good results. After this watering the cultivation reached the flowering stage. Wheat and barley started to shoot up and wave in the cold breeze. Peas and legumes showed their white flowers and the green fruit husks began to emerge. At this stage cultivation was given full attention and all possible precautions were taken against pests. The long cold winter contributed in no small degree to the healthy growth of all varieties in this rotation. The fourth and last watering was given by the first week of April, when the crop was ripening. After the last bed was irrigated the *sagiya* gears were locked and the bulls were led out to rest under the palm trees and joyfully attended to their mangers, stacked with fodder.

The harvest season was drawing near and the bird-scaring campaign began. Sparrows collected from every house-top and swooped in clouds from the lofty branches of date-palms on to the cultivation, picking the ripe seeds of wheat and barley and causing great damage to leguminous beans. The harvest period coincided with the hatching season of their young and they developed a ravening desire to attack the harvest, to feed the young beaks waiting for them in the nests. But the Nubians had their own ways of combating these raids. They would set cattle dung smouldering at various spots upwind of the field, so creating heavy screens of pungent smoke which drove away the flocks. In some *sagiyas* they built scarecrows of crossed poles clothed in *jellabias* and turbans, with pointed sticks in their hands. Some cultivators tied long ropes to fixed poles in the middle of the field, to which crude bells made of empty fruit cans were attached, which clanged in succession when the rope was pulled or shaken. Some clever boys built wind wheels with small sails, to which similar bells were tied to give the same effect when the wind turned the wheels. Other boys spread out in the field with long ropes which they whipped about in the air causing sudden cracks, while others beat empty petrol tins as they paced along the ridges between the beds.

By the first week of April the signs of the new harvest had begun to

show. The leaves of wheat and barley changed from dark green to light yellow, the stalk became dry and hard and the seeds started to get rigid and solid. Pea and bean pods and capsules blacked at the edges and their leaves became curly and rough. At the beginning of the third week the first bundle of barley stalks fell under the heavy strokes of the sickle, inaugurating the harvest season. They were cut at the root, gathered in bundles and lined on the bed, exposed for the sun to dry. Peas and lentils were then split and rolled in heaps and left to the sun's rays. Beans, and later wheat, were gathered in the same way as barley. After a week or so of drying out, the stacks and rolls were removed in succession to the threshing floor, or *dar*, which was specially prepared and plastered with a mixture of mud and cured cattle dung, ready for threshing.

The Nubians had their own methods of hulling their winter crop; it was done either by the *norag* or by donkeys' hooves. The *norag* was a primitive locally-made machine, resembling a small wooden carriage, with twenty to thirty knife-wheels made of flat iron, set close together like the disc plough of a tractor. It was normally drawn by a bull, while a boy sat on it with a whip in his hand to give the machine weight and keep the bull in constant circular motion. The seeds were husked as the knife wheels passed over them at repeated intervals. For the donkey method, seven to ten donkeys were lined up, tied neck to neck and linked by a rope to a central pole, which was firmly fixed to the ground in the middle of the threshing floor to secure a constant circular motion as the donkeys marched round in line abreast. The seeds were hulled under the strokes of the sharp hooves of the trotting donkeys. It took the donkeys about thirty rounds to husk a load spread on the threshing floor.

After the operation of hulling was finished, the broken stalks (*tibn*) were separated with a fork, which only left the seeds and the finer particles of hay and pods. These were got rid of by throwing the mixed products high into the wind either by hand, or with a shovel or mat tray. The heavy seeds fell direct to the clean ground, and the light chaff was blown away by the breeze. The yield was then collected and packed up in jute sacks. The average crop for all the major varieties was 5 *ardebs* per *feddan*. The wheat was taken to the dwelling-houses, where it was stored and sealed in mud bins. It was consumed for daily subsistence by mixing its flour with that of *dura* and milled and baked into thin layers of local bread (*kabida*). Barley was used mainly as animal fodder; among humans only diabetics ate it. Part of the beans and legumes were used for family consumption, and part went for sale in the market. Peas and lentils were mainly cash crops. The average prices for these products at Halfa market, per *ardeb*, were £S 7 for

wheat, £S 4 for peas and £S 6 for lentils. The Nubians had various domestic uses for the by-products. They mixed pea leaves (*wirreig*) with soup and made a nourishing paste with which they ate the *kabida*. With the long stalks of wheat and barley they made thick mats which they used for roofing, hutbuilding and *sagiya* screens. Pea stalks were used for similar purposes. Hay and the left-overs from the rolls of peas and lentils were used as animal feed and fuel.

Before closing my account of the winter rotation, it is worth mentioning that every Nubian cultivator was keen to develop a small vegetable garden beside his winter crop. By every *sagiya* a small plot was set aside and occupied by winter vegetables. Apart from potatoes and onions, other varieties such as spinach, sweet pepper, cucumber, marrow, sweet beans, tomatoes, cabbage, cauliflower, radish, beet and salad vegetables were grown. Root vegetables were grown in ridges while others were sown in flat beds, and organic manure was always used in preference to chemicals. The product was partly used for domestic consumption, but most of it was sent to the market for cash.

The *seifi* rotation was a minor one and the least important. It was grown at the hardest time of the year, when the river was at its lowest level and the *sagiya* at its highest. No rotation was as toilsome to both cultivator and bulls as the *seifi*. All *sagiya* ropes were at their longest stretch and the buckets were at their maximum number, making the heaviest possible load. Pump owners added more footage to their suction pipes, which used up more energy from the machines. It often happened in July that the river became so low that the water receded from the banks and was confined to narrow limits of the middle course. In this case cultivators had to dig canals to connect the water supply to their *sagiya* well and the basins of the suction pipes. For this reason the *seifi* rotation only covered one-third of the total cultivable area and was sown on the beds nearest the channels.

The land was cleared of the winter roots, ploughed and prepared in the same way as before. Sowing was done in shallow holes dug by a small trowel. The main crops sown in this rotation included millet fodder, white and red *lubia*, castor and the summer vegetables such as okra (ladies' fingers), *mulukhia*, and *rigla*. After the beds were levelled, the watering started. July and August were months of extreme heat and the temperature in the shade at Wadi Halfa ranged from 46 to 51°C, causing excessive evaporation. Both *seifi* and *dameira* took more water than the winter rotation: in most cases they required a double amount. Weeding was done in the same way, but without much trouble, as the *seifi* and *dameira* plants were rather tough and resistant to weeds. Harvesting of millet was the same as that of wheat and barley, except that the heads of *dura* were cut and placed on the threshing floor for

three weeks to dry, and threshing was carried out by beating them with heavy sticks, to separate seed from husk. The average yield was 4 *ardebs* a *feddan* for *dura* and maize. *Dura* stalks were stored for animal fodder and for fuel.

The *dameira* could be considered as the continuation of the *seifi*. It was sown by mid-July when the *seifi* was ripening, and included all items of the *seifi* with some slight variations, such as maize. Water melons, sweet melons, groundnuts, marrow and onion seeds were all sown. By this time the early spate of the Nile flood used to reach Wadi Halfa; the water changed from pure blue to chocolate-coloured mud. *Sagiya* wells and pump basins were filled by the rising water; suction pipes and *sagiya alases* were shortened. Life was getting easier and both bulls and cultivators were happy. The flood reached its peak in mid-September. The water rose almost to the brim of the banks, and the *alases* became so short that their loop was only slightly longer than the circumference of the spoked wheel. The cultivation beds were well irrigated. The *dameira* harvest followed the same pattern as the *seifi* and was gathered in October.

During the third week of October the Nile water began to subside and the current gradually slowed down. The bank slopes started to emerge again, well coated with a fertile layer of silty residue as the water level descended by degrees; in the meantime the slopes (*juruf*) were well soaked with water and sufficiently irrigated for a complete rotation. By experience the Nubians got to know the best crops that grew on a particular contour of the slope, according to their duration. Thus on the highest contour belt they grew white *lubia*, on the next red *lubia*, and on the lowest belt *turmus* (lupin) and tomatoes. All *juruf* crops were harvested in January.

## (ii) The Dibeira Scheme

The Dibeira scheme was considered the biggest and most important agricultural asset in Wadi Halfa District. It was originated in 1906 by the Greek contractor, Mr Loiso. It covered an area of 600 *feddans* and was irrigated by two relay pumps of 12-inch bore for the winter and 16-inch bore for the *seifi*. It started as a private enterprise and was run on a purely capitalistic basis. The majority of the tenants were recruited from the Eleigat of Wadi el Arab, and were treated as daily paid workers. Crop rotation was the same as the normal cycle, except that the *seifi* included a wide area of cotton. During its early years the proprietor of the scheme discovered that the daily wage system was rather expensive and that most of the workers would receive wages for little or no work. To give them an incentive to work he concluded an

agreement with them by which they became partners and obtained a quarter of the total yield. The agreement proved its worth and the scheme continued successfully until 1930, when a long island of sand deposit appeared after the flood, covering an area of 170 *feddans*, stretching along the river bank adjacent to the pump site. The suction basin was buried in deep sand and the river water was far away. All efforts to reconnect the water supply failed, and the scheme was abandoned.

In 1933 the Government bought the scheme for £S 6,000; the area was increased to 1,050 *feddans*, new canals were dug and three giant pumps were mounted on a floating barge moored at a suitably high level at Ashkeit. Meanwhile the Government had resold the land to the inhabitants at £S 15 per *feddan*, which was calculated to cover the price of the scheme and the cost of the pumps and canalization. The cost of irrigation was fixed at a flat rate of £S 4 per *feddan*. The inhabitants of Dibeira and Ashkeit thus became the landlords of the best agricultural project in the whole area. With the hard work of the tenants, with whom the landowners had come to an agreement on crop-sharing, and under the supervision of the Department of Agriculture, the scheme was successful in raising the standard of living of the inhabitants.

### (iii) *Date Palms*

Whenever one thinks of Nubia, date trees immediately come to mind. The Nubians found in their date trees a compensation from heaven for



6. Date palms at Argin

the scarcity of their land; they considered them their most cherished possession, and an invaluable gift of nature. They were the backbone of their local economy, the only reliable source of cash return, and indeed the only sign of wealth. They were the subject of boasts among the living generations and the most prized investment for future ones. Every village, every household and nearly every individual owned a palm tree or the share of a tree. The whole river bank was lined with forests of date palms and in some places, like Argin, Dibeira, Ashkeit and Degheim, impenetrable to the eye. In a desert like Nubia, where no other tree survives, and no cloud hides the face of the sun throughout the year, the relief one finds in shade after the heat of the desert is overwhelming.

And the throes came upon her by the trunk of a palm. She said: 'Oh that I had died before this, and been a thing forgotten, forgotten quite.' And one cried to her from below her: 'Grieve not thou, thy lord hath provided a streamlet at your feet: And shake the trunk of the palm-tree toward thee; it will drop fresh ripe dates upon thee. Eat then and drink, and be of cheerful eye.'\*

There is among the trees one that is pre-eminently blessed as the Muslim among men; it is the date tree.†

I entrust for thy care and attention thine aunt the date tree.‡

These sacred words were repeated by the Nubians when they spoke of their date trees. They regarded them with a sentiment of love similar to what they felt for their own children. They nursed the shoots, irrigated them regularly, pruned and trimmed the branches with care and protected them against damage by stray animals. Generally the date palm was considered one of the most economical species of flora in the sense that it gave a good crop for very little labour. A transplanted shoot needed care and watering only for three or four years, after which it would develop a trunk and bear fruit. Then all that was required was the trimming of the old lower branches, pollination, and the collection of the harvest.

The seasons for transplanting the shoots were governed by the Coptic calendar, as it provided the most accurate timing for agriculture, and the Nubians were particular about it. The first season fell in the months of *Barmahat* and *Baramoda*, immediately after the cold spell of winter, which roughly speaking coincide with March and April, and the second season covered *Abeeb* and *Misra* which often overlap with July and

\* Koran, Chapter of Mary.

† Sacred Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad.

‡ Ibid.



August. The shoots for transplantation were carefully selected. They had to be from good mother trees and three to four years old. It was essential that the shoot should come from the surface roots of the mother tree. Lateral shoots protruding from the trunk were useless and had to be exterminated on appearance as their growth was reckoned to reduce the yield of the parent. A suitable shoot had to be healthy and weigh between 9 and 12 kg. Its likelihood of success was proportionate to its weight. Before separation, the roots were covered with soil and irrigated daily for a month. The uprooting was then carried out by two or three strokes of a chisel by a local expert, attention always being given to maintaining intact the deep roots of the separated shoot. Immediately after being severed the roots were smeared with mud, then wrapped in a moistened jute rag and placed with others in a pit wide enough to hold thirty to forty shoots for nursing. They were then irrigated daily for a month by which time the successful shoots showed signs of growth, detectable by the elongation of the branches and protrusion of the core (*golgol*). Transplanting then took place, each shoot being removed to a separate pit where it was irrigated once every three days for the first month. Watering was normally done in the afternoons. After the lapse of a month, they were irrigated only once or twice a week for a year, up to the end of the first year of independent life. In the second year watering was further restricted to once or twice a month, as conditions might require.

Date seedlings grew and became trees; but the rule of nature is such that the majority of trees growing from seeds turned out to be male trees, while the few females produced a small crop of inferior quality. Having no parents they were called *awlad haram*, meaning illegitimate. Nearly all male trees in Nubia belonged to this category and the Nubians had no favourites among male trees, and so they did not practise shoot nursing for them.

To return to our shoots, once they had been transplanted in separate pits, the first thing to be done was to protect them against damage by stray animals. Either a *zeriba* of thorny branches was built around the ridges of pits, or sometimes when the owner developed a new garden of palms, he built a mud wall around the entire plot. After three years of independent growth, the trunk projected, the old branches turned yellow, then brown and dry, and were cut off at the stem leaving a regular pattern on the trunk, like the scales of a fish. In the fourth year the young trees bore their first fruit, which was normally scanty. The yield increased until the trees reached their prime in their tenth year, when full bearing was attained. This continued to the age of forty-five or fifty, then the yield shrank and decreased steadily up to the age of sixty. By this time the trunk was too high for pollination and



harvesting, making the yield useless in quality and impossible to collect. Signs of old age began to appear; the lower part of the trunk got eroded near the roots and wore thin. The foliage lost its graceful appearance and looked thick and full of dry branches; the roots also started to wither and decay, and could no longer hold the swinging lofty trunk against the winter wind. By this time the tree would be waiting only for a strong gale to uproot the trunk and bring about its end.

The main types of date palm-trees grown in Halfa District were the following, in order of preference: Bartamouda, Gondeila, Barakawi and Gaw. The last category included all the inferior types of dates like the Gargoda and Digna. The Bartamouda gave a middle-sized, fleshy, sweet fruit with a small stone. It was the best species and in Egypt fetched very high prices. The Gondeila had a larger, more fleshy fruit, but with a lower percentage of sugar than the Bartamouda. It too found a good market in Egypt, where a popular syrup was made out of it, which was served at breakfast during Ramadan. The drawback of these superior types lay in their delicate growth, which required special attention, and in their need for regular irrigation. Moreover, the Bartamouda trees were not regular bearers. Yet the higher price they realised in comparison with other types outweighed these defects. Then came the Barakawi, fleshy and with bigger stones. It contained less sugar, and was not very sweet. The Barakawi dates were most popular in the Sudan: they were delicious and moderate in price, had a high rate of resistance against pests, and lasted well in storage. On account of its high yield the Barakawi tree was considered the best fruit-bearing species of date palm. Last were the different varieties of Gaw. Gaw were inferior in size and quality, their flesh being only a thin layer over thick stones. Gaw dates had no attraction for the foreign market and were only eaten by poor people in the Sudan. Being of little nutritive value, they were mainly used for local industry, such as the distillation of spirits, vinegar and *araki*, the local gin. It was also used in the brewing of domestic beverages like the *sharbut* and *dakkai*.

Gaw trees were typical desert palms. They grew easily and survived well under the most difficult conditions. Their shoots scarcely invited the labour of transplantation and so they were left to grow beside their mothers, which they replaced when the latter died. For this reason a Gaw pit (*bura*) normally contained a grove of palm-trees of different ages growing around the roots of the single mother, each replacing the other and multiplying as the years pass by. An old Nubian told me that there were certain *buras* in his village which had been bequeathed from generation to generation since ancient times. Gaw represented 50 per cent of the total number of palm trees in the Halfa District.

Pollination was always entrusted to local experts, who also cut off

the date bunches when they ripened, receiving one bunch of dates from every three they served. During the pollination season these men were to be seen climbing from one palm trunk to another, like lizards, collecting the male flowers. The flowers were usually cut with their buds and left to dry. They were then threshed to a powder, which was divided into small amounts, each amount being wrapped up in paper and rolled around with palm leaves. These capsules were more or less the size of cartridges. When the female flowers burst open, several of these powder cartridges were carried by the local expert in his cap, which he held in his teeth as he climbed the female trunk. He carefully inspected all the flower buds and whenever he found a suitable one for pollination, he took a strong grip of one of the branches with his left hand, then with his right hand took a capsule from his cap, broke it and shed the powder all over the tender branches. As the female flowers do not all open at once, their service had to be rendered piecemeal, and the job would take several days to complete.

Unpollinated flowers produce very poor, flat, and tasteless small dates called *sis*, small fish. These are not eaten but are used for animal fodder.

The date harvest was one of the most celebrated occasions in Nubia. The date fruit started to change colour from green to grey late in June and July (*Bauna*), and quickly changed either to bright yellow or crimson red. In August (*Abeeb*), the fruit became softer and darker, with some wrinkles and contraction at the ends. This was the sign of ripeness. Late in August, the first fresh ripe dates (*rutab*) were picked. This was seldom done, as the common practice in Nubia was to let the dates ripen to dryness on the tree before being collected. Meanwhile soft dates (*agwa*) were always picked as they ripened, for fear of fermentation and rottenness if they were left any longer.

Late in September and early October (*Misra* and *Tut*) the fruit became dry and dark, losing its lustrous brightness and looking rather coarse and shrivelled. They were ready for harvest. By this time everybody would be out in the field, men carrying empty jute sacks, women with their baskets and mat trays, and children, all going to the date-palms. The local harvester could be seen folding the lower part of his *jellabia*, tying it to his waist like a belt and placing his sickle at his hip as he climbed up the trunk of the female tree. When he reached the foliage he rested his back against the core branches, pulled his sickle with his right hand, held the bunch with his left and with two or three quick movements separated the bunch from the core. Then he dropped it on to the ground, where it fell with a dull thud like a shot vulture, while underneath a gathering of children were busy picking up dates which had scattered on impact. Women held the bunches, hustled the

dates from the 'laces' and heaped them into the baskets and mat trays. Men packed the dates in jute sacks and stitched them when they were full. When a consignment of three sacks was ready, it would be loaded on a pack animal, which was then led to a sunny plot near the village where the dates were spread out to dry. The empty sacks were sent back to be refilled as long as the harvester with his sickle continued climbing from one tree to another. At the end of the day the inhabitants returned to their homes in good spirits. Old women, carrying a good selection of the new crop in their mat trays, which they carried on their heads, and chewing tobacco leaves, chatted and gossiped with each other, as they shuffled their way to the village, sending up clouds of dust with the tails of their *gargars*. Young boys returned with quick steps, with their pockets and caps full of dates and with light hearts too, for they had received their reward for their working day. The man with the sickle made sure that his accounts had been settled, that he had received his bunches from the owners and that they were big bunches too.

A good female tree bore between twenty and thirty bunches and an average yielded around twenty. Poor trees gave ten to fifteen bunches. The produce of an exceptionally good tree filled two sacks; the average was one sack, and a poor species gave less.

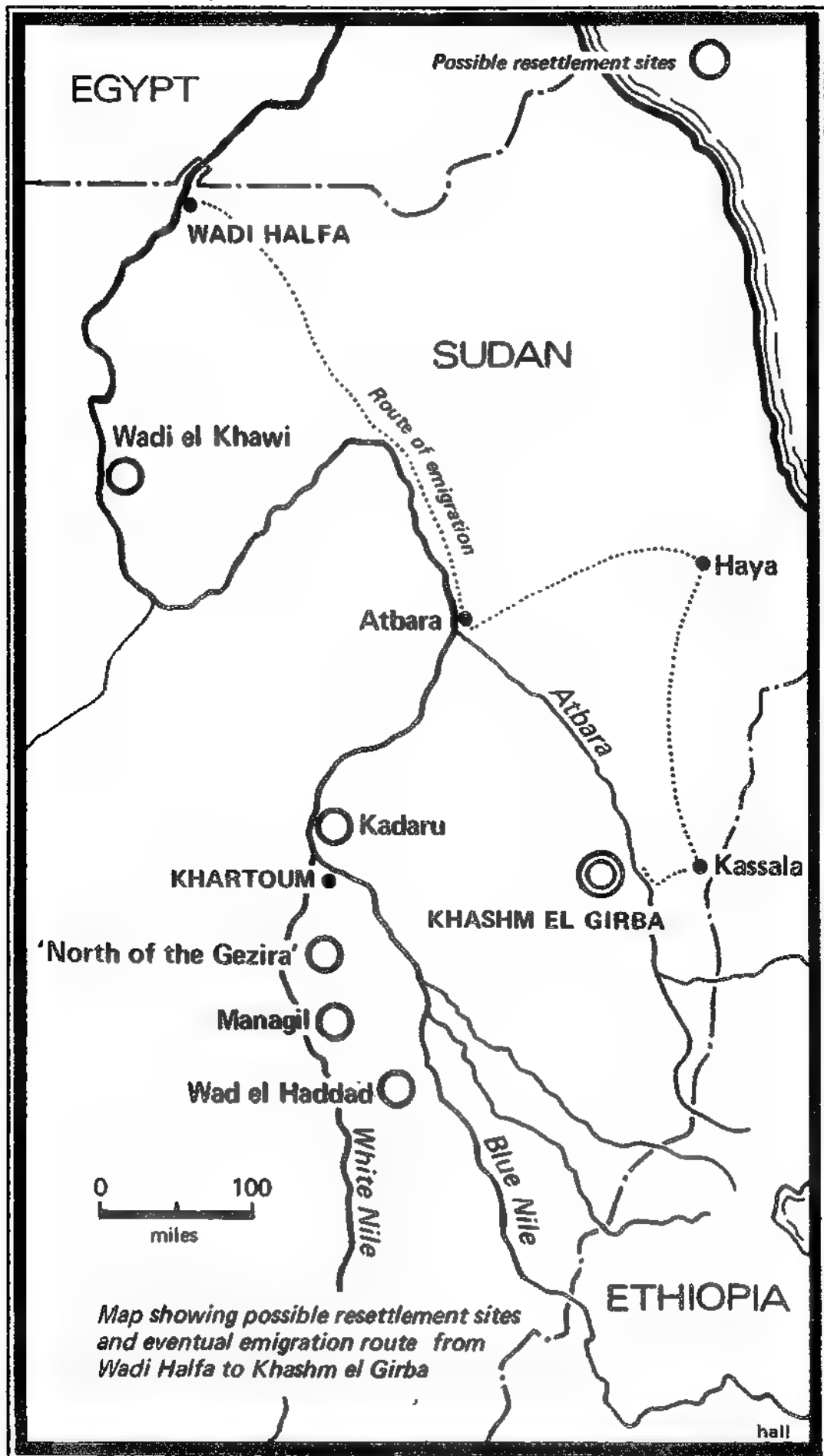
When the dates were dry, they would be carefully sorted out, graded, and then packed in sound jute sacks. Empty petrol tins were mainly used for soft, fresh ripe dates, but rarely for dry dates. When all the produce had been packed up, it would either be sold to the local merchant of the village, who normally subtracted his account for goods issued on credit to the owner during the course of the year and paid the balance, or it would be sent by lorry or camel direct to the wholesalers in Halfa market. In the past the local traders used to exploit the inhabitants by selling goods on credit at very high prices and buying their dates very cheaply. But as time went on and restrictions were made to protect the producers, the local merchants gave up their dubious practice and adopted the system of legal competition. Before 1958 dates used to realise good profits in Egypt, but owing to restrictions on imports and the wide-scale nationalisation policy, all possible competition in date prices was eliminated, and the market was severely hit. Prices went steadily down, and exports to Egypt were considerably affected.

Perhaps no tree in the history of horticulture has ever penetrated into the social and economic life of a region as deeply as the date tree did in Nubia. It affected many sides of the inhabitants' lives, and its traces could be observed everywhere. Its uses were varied and considerable and nothing was ever wasted.

Date trees were sold for cash, and would realise good prices. They could be mortgaged, and the mere existence of a tree was an economic insurance. Families, as we have seen, obtained their day-to-day requirements from the village traders on credit, but as long as there were date trees, the traders were sure to get their money back in the form either of dates or of cash. Date trees were also given as wedding gifts.

Out of their leaves (*nyige*) the Nubians wove ropes, and made mat trays, baskets and rugs; they also made crude sponges for bathing and for cleaning their utensils. Other uses were as fodder for animals and as fuel. With the branches (*kossi*) they roofed their houses, lined their beds, and made crates for fruit and vegetable consignments; they also manufactured chairs, tables and other domestic furniture. The branches were used for decoration in ceremonies, and as coffins for female funerals; they were also fixed as gravestones as a sign of respect. The core of the fallen trees (*golgol*) was eaten, and was delicious too. The core branches of the young trees were cured, then beaten to fibre, out of which ropes for the *alases* of the *sagiya* were made. These ropes were also used in roofing mats and *sagiya* screens. The branch sticks were also used as walking sticks and fire fuel. The trunks (*umbo*) had several uses: as aerial cross bars for the *sagiyas*, as rafters for the roofing of *sagiya* wells, as *sagiya* troughs, and, cut into poles, for house roofs and door and window lintels. What remained was used as fuel. Out of the bunch laces (*eire*) they made brooms for sweeping out their houses, and mat trays. Out of the stem fibres (*ashman*) they wove ropes which were used for tethering their domestic animals.

To sum up, date fruits (*fanti*) were eaten either when freshly ripe (*rutab*), soft (*agwa*) or dry (*tamr*). They were offered to guests and sold for cash. From dates they made jam, a local gin, and vinegar. They used them for cake making, syrup in Ramadan and porridge for women in childbirth. Spoilt and rotten dates were used as animal fodder, and the seeds as fuel. In general, the family income depended more or less on the cash return of their date crop, and only to a minor extent on the surplus yield of their three rotations:



PART II

THE EMIGRATION

## THE HIGH DAM: FIRST REACTIONS

On 8 November 1959, an agreement was concluded between the Sudan and the United Arab Republic, which aimed at utilizing the Nile waters to the best possible advantage of the two contracting countries and providing for full control of the Nile waters.

Before this agreement the division of the summer waters of the Nile was regulated by the 1929 Nile Water Agreement, which had established the acquired rights of both Egypt and the Sudan at 48 and 4 milliard cubic metres respectively. The flood waters, calculated at 32 milliards (as measured at Aswan), were not taken into account, as they were left to flow as waste into the sea. The present agreement procured the means for trapping this waste and making full use of it for agricultural development in the two countries. The High Dam at Aswan, as proposed by Egypt, offered the means for realising this objective. It is considered the first link in a series of projects for storage of the Nile waters through the whole year.

The first two items of the new agreement confirmed the existing acquired rights of both countries in the division of the summer water of the Nile, as established by the 1929 Agreement.

The first two items of the second chapter (dealing with the Nile control projects and division of their benefits between the two states) secured the consent of the Sudan to the construction of the High Dam, and the agreement of Egypt to the building of the Roseires Dam and other projects which the Sudan considers essential for the utilization of its share.

Items 3 and 4 of the same chapter calculated the average yield of the Nile waters (as measured at Aswan) at a total of 84 milliard cubic metres per year. Subtracting the acquired rights over the summer water (52 milliards), plus 10 milliards estimated loss through evaporation on the reservoir lake, the net profit of the High Dam was calculated at 22 milliard cubic metres per year. This additional gain was divided at the rate of 14.5 milliards for the Sudan and 7.5 milliards for Egypt, raising the total shares of the Nile waters to 55.5 milliards for Egypt and 18.5 milliards for the Sudan.

By item 6 of the same chapter Egypt undertook to pay the Sudan £15 million as full compensation for the damage resulting to existing property as a result of storage in the reservoir lake up to a reduced level of 182 metres above sea level (survey datum).

Item 7 rested the responsibility for the transfer of the inhabitants (of the affected area inside the Sudan) on the Sudan Government and the deadline for completion of the evacuation was set for the end of June 1963.

The above items are those which are relevant to our narrative. Other chapters of the agreement relate to future projects for utilisation of the waters lost through evaporation in the southern reaches of the Upper Nile Basin, and the technical co-operation between the two countries; these do not concern us here.

As soon as the agreement was signed, the Egyptians lost no time in declaring their intention to go ahead with the execution of the High Dam scheme, the final design and plans of which were by then ready. The High Dam itself is a colossal and unique structure. It is a huge blind wall of sand and rockfill, sealing the Nile course from bank to bank, a width of 3600 metres. The dam wall is 980 metres broad at its base in the river bed, and slopes up at the sides to a height of 111 metres till at crest level the width is only 30 metres. The whole structure is covered with a skin wall of reinforced concrete with a grout curtain and a horizontal impervious part on the upstream side connected with the central core. The reservoir lake, which extends 500 km. upstream, is reckoned to store a maximum of 157 milliard cubic metres of water. The width of the lake varies between 25 and 10 km. and its maximum depth, upstream of the dam, is 97 metres. Thus it is one of the largest man-made lakes in the world, second only to the Kariba Dam lake in Rhodesia.

The idea of the High Dam was first initiated by an Egyptian Greek agricultural engineer, Adrian Daninos, whose visionary schemes for the utilization of the Nile waters have been known since 1912. His first paper suggesting building a great dam at Aswan for storing the water throughout the year was presented in 1948, at the first meeting of the Institut d'Egypte. He estimated the capacity of the reservoir lake of his dam project at 52 milliard cubic metres. In September 1952 the West German Government, desiring to cool the rising feeling in the Arab world against the DM 3,000 million she had given to Israel as compensation for the sufferings of the Jews under Hitler, had prepared the High Dam project for Egypt. The design was assigned to the Hotchief and Dortmund Union of Engineers, Germany, and proposals of the preparatory work of tenders for the design, execution and financing of the project were submitted by the Union on 18 October.



On 22 November the Egyptian Government invited two firms, one of them the Hotchief and Dortmund Union, to send their technical experts to Aswan to prepare the design of the scheme. This took two years to complete, and in November 1954 the board of international consultants approved one of the alternative designs put forward by Hotchief and Dortmund.\*

The High Dam brings great benefits to Egypt. The Nile is subject to high fluctuations between years of drought and years of plenty, hence control of its fickle regime is vital. Its flow varies between 13,500 cubic metres a second at Aswan at the height of the flood and 5,000 when the water is exceptionally low. In the past sixty years the mean flow of the Nile has varied between 9,500 cubic metres per second at flood peak to only 450 in times of drought. Floods have thus submerged the flat land of Egypt from time to time, causing havoc to cities and crops. The High Dam provides the means to avoid these fluctuations by permanently storing the surplus water which is normally allowed to flow as waste to the sea, and guaranteeing regular and assured irrigation to existing agriculture, which can also be expanded. The Egyptians assess that about 1.5 million *feddans* of desert land can be reclaimed and used for agriculture when the water is available.

The twelve giant turbines built at the downstream spillway tunnels are designed to generate 10 milliard kwh. per year. This enormous energy will reduce the cost of electricity to the minimum and make it available for industrial development and other uses throughout Egypt.

These are the great purposes which the High Dam will achieve for Egypt, and there is no doubt that they are very valuable economic and national objectives, aiming at raising the standard of living of the Egyptian *fellah* and bringing about radical changes in the bases of the national economy.

Yet the High Dam was not without its critics. Perhaps the most notable was himself an Egyptian, Dr. Abd el Aziz Ahmed, an eminent hydrologist. In a paper submitted to the Institute of Civil Engineers in London, he warned that the conception of the High Dam was foreign to Egypt and would mean a complete reversal of the time-honoured Nile irrigation policy. The High Dam built without sluice gates would trap annually 134 million tons of silt, composed of the most fertile volcanic material in the world. Since all the cultivable soil in Egypt was formed and annually coated by this sediment, for which no artificial substitute has yet been devised, its complete absence would cause the fertility of

\* The full story of the High Dam from its inception to its completion is well surveyed by Tom Little in his book *High Dam at Aswan*.

the soil in Egypt to degenerate and its productivity to be reduced. The clear silt-free Nile water flowing downstream from Aswan would tend to scour the river bed and erode its banks, and undermine all the hydrological barrier dams built across its course from Aswan to the Delta. The evaporation and seepage rate, coupled with unpredictable changes in the underground water movement in the reservoir lake, would be so great that Egypt would end up with less water than it had before.

Whether these predictions are sound or false, true or exaggerated, only time will tell. We in the Sudan sincerely hope that the outcome of this ambitious scheme will be happy for Egypt.

However great the benefits of this agreement, the side effects were disastrous. The Nubians were the only victims – the greatest part of their country being doomed to destruction. Stretches of 500 km., covering the whole of Egyptian Nubia, and of 150 km. inside the Sudan, would be completely immersed under the reservoir lake. In Sudanese Nubia Wadi Halfa town and twenty-seven villages, with all their agricultural land, date trees and historic remains, would be swallowed by the waters. At some places the width of the lake was expected to extend 20 km. from bank to bank, in other words, one bank would be beyond the horizon from the other. The depth of the lake was calculated at 67 m. at Wadi Halfa town, thus leaving the crescent of the highest minaret under 40 m. of water. About 40,000 people would be made homeless, and the intricate human and logistical problem of their emigration and resettlement had to be solved before the deadline in July 1963.

When the joint communiqué was broadcast on 10 November 1959 from Omdurman and Cairo, the news spread through the area like wildfire. The immediate reaction was one of general and bitter resentment. However, the Nubians were not caught unawares. Egypt's plans to build the High Dam, and the effects which that scheme would have on their country, had been known to them for a long time, and they had been accustomed to following the question in the Egyptian press. The differences of opinion over the division of the water shares, which had dominated the previous negotiations and brought them to a deadlock, had allowed them to hope that no agreement would ever be reached. So when the communiqué was issued, their hopes were crushed. The blow was too hard for them to bear: many were so shocked that they could not believe their ears and ran into the streets in the hope of finding someone who could tell them something different. In despair they collected in small groups to exchange opinions, but they remained perplexed and confused. The magnitude of the crisis left no room for differences of opinion. The groups would disperse only to

meet again. Their mental powers were paralysed. For days they were sunk in a mire of gloomy thoughts. Old people with no future to live for met the news with a groan and envied their dead colleagues in their graves. Individuals were to be seen walking alone in the streets, talking aloud to themselves looking left and right, gazing in astonishment, then clapping their hands in wonder, saying that they would never believe it. A madman in Halfa town, who wore a red turban and used to carry a long stick with which he pointed to a rock on the summit of a hill near the town, saying that within a short time water would reach to that level, was hailed as a saint for the truth of his prophecy. The poets composed the most moving verse in tribute to their beloved land which was set to music and sung in all the villages. The whole area was infected with anxiety verging on hysteria. The future was a blank, and the ordeal they were heading for looked like the day of judgment.

Since ancient times the Nubians had clung to their narrow strip of fertile land along the banks of the Nile and perpetuated life in it. They were separated from the rest of mankind by the arid expanse of the Sahara desert, and they were content with their land and what it yielded, limited though both were. They had managed to adapt themselves to all the differing aspects of their environment, harsh or soft, fruitful or barren; and down the ages they could derive a noble meaning and a high moral tradition from it. They liked the sands of their desert and its bare crags. They loved the Nile which was their sole life-giver. The remains of the ancient civilisations scattered at the edges of their villages were a source of pride: they used to boast that they had deep roots, and their ancestors had contributed to building the first civilisation known to man. Temples and churches were evidence of their ancient link with God. The formidable cataracts blocking the course of the river at various places were a gift of nature against the infiltration and penetration of aliens into their country. Having no neighbours they confined themselves to the limits of their community and land, and developed a feeling of individuality. They tended to have a good opinion of themselves.

In the midst of this atmosphere of anxiety and grief it was announced that President Abboud would pay a visit to the area on 6 December. This announcement was an immediate relief to the inhabitants. They started to recover from the shock; emotion gave way to reason, and they began to think seriously of an alternative home. The visit of the President gave them hope that the government was taking their problem in hand and they were not to be deserted in their misfortune. In fact, every individual in the Sudan was sharing their feelings.

They set up a local committee to prepare a good reception in the

town and the main villages with authority to present a petition demanding an alternative home which would have the potential to ensure a good and happy future for their children, and that the assessment and payment of compensation for all their immovable property should be fair and equitable. Within a few days the roads were decorated and posters bearing messages of welcome were placed at major cross-roads and hoisted in shops. Arrangements were also made for big gatherings at the main villages.

On 6 December President Abboud's plane touched down at 7 a.m. He was accompanied by a number of important ministers, including the Minister of Health, the late Dr. Mohamed Ahmed Ali, a Nubian from Halfa town. He was cheered by a big crowd which had been gathering at the airport since dawn. At 9 a.m. in the open space of Wadi Halfa town and amid a great crowd, President Abboud, in the uniform of Lieutenant-General, walked with a confident step to the microphone. He carried a small ebony stick and wore sun-glasses. His dignified face was calm but some traces of sadness could be observed. In his address



7. President Abboud addressing the people at Wadi Halfa

he expressed his gratitude to the people for their reception of him. Then as he attempted to enter into the subject, his emotions took the upper hand, and in a breaking voice he said: 'When I was in Khartoum I had the impression that the impact of the event was so hard upon you, that you had yielded to your emotions, and so I thought of coming here to stand by you during these critical moments; but when I saw you today, I found you in a morale higher and spirit better than our own.' At this point his voice was choked for a few seconds, and tears were seen to fall from under his glasses. Then he collected himself and in clear voice he talked at length, surveying the terms of the agreement and the great benefits which would proceed to the two countries from its application. He ended: 'I am aware of your great difficulties and the gravity of your situation. I tell you sincerely that my mind is fully occupied in finding a solution to your imperative problem. I declare that I undertake to provide you with good livelihood and fair and equitable compensation for all your property which will be lost, and that every one of you can be assured of the preservation of his rights.' Finally he said that he intended to appoint a government commission and other committees at local level to consider the steps to be taken for their future resettlement. 'As for the selection of your new home,' he said, 'I promise to accept your choice of place, wherever you want to go, in any part of the Sudan, and that none of you will be forced to go anywhere against his will.'

Next day he visited the villages of Degheim, Ashkeit and Dibeira, where he was cordially welcomed by all sections of the inhabitants. On the third day he completed his tour by visiting Argin, Sarra and Faras on both banks of the Nile, on board *El Thoraya*, thus covering the most heavily-populated section of the affected area. On the fourth day he left for Khartoum.

Before his departure the President received a petition submitted to him by some representatives of the local committee on behalf of the inhabitants. It contained the following twelve demands:

1. The inhabitants should be resettled in the most suitable site from the economic, social and health point of view.
2. The people should be resettled in a manner which would preserve the identity and unity of their community.
3. All their movable property should be transferred with them to their new home.
4. The emigrants should be given the ultimate right to the monopoly of the industrial development in their new home.
5. The agricultural scheme in their new resettlement area should be planned and developed to the best standard possible.

6. The geographical and social unity of the villages should be preserved, with their existing characteristics.
7. The Government should seek help and technical advice from abroad in the planning of their resettlement.
8. Representatives of the inhabitants should be given the opportunity to visit the proposed sites for their resettlement.
9. Qualified Nubians should be recruited to share the responsibilities of the planning and the execution of their resettlement.
10. Consideration should be given to future development of the scheme area.
11. The new resettlement area should be carefully planned and well laid out.
12. All the inhabitants of the affected area should be exempted from taxation, as they were expected to face financial difficulties during the period of their evacuation and resettlement.

The President promised that he would give due consideration to these requests when he returned to Khartoum. This visit had had a remarkable psychological effect. It relieved the inhabitants of strain and restored their confidence. I could observe that the smile had returned to their faces and that they began to look towards their future with optimism.

Being the official in charge of the district administration I found myself on the threshold of a unique experience, a trial of a magnitude unprecedented in the Sudan. The whole operation of emigration and evacuation of movable property, with all its human and physical problems, rested heavily on my shoulders. Only three and a half years remained; time was already precious, so a start had to be made quickly. A plan with a strict time-table had to be drawn up outlining the preparatory work for the emigration. Consequently I detached my mind from the Nubians' gossip and confined it to my own problems. There was much work to be accomplished before the inhabitants took off for their new home.

## THE CENSUS : THE PROBLEM OF COMPENSATION

The first necessity for me was to know the exact number of inhabitants affected, whether present or absentees. The human census carried out in all the affected villages in 1956 was not of much help, as it consisted of sampling and not of actual counting. The number of their livestock and the amount of baggage and household belongings were practically unknown. We had to assess all the commercial stock in the market and in the village shops, together with industrial machinery like flour-mills, produce cleaners and pump engines, in order to arrange their transportation to the new home. In addition, we had to prepare figures for compensation purposes covering all immovable property, 'property attached to the soil'. The number of date trees listed for tax purpose could not be relied upon as the owners were in the habit of submitting low figures to the local authorities. Moreover it included only the female adult trees. Neither males nor young females were incorporated. Also they had to be graded according to their original species or family group, as the price of each differed in value. Fruit trees, likewise, had to be counted and classified. The land register did not help, as all land without exception was registered in the names of persons who had died generations ago, and it showed no area of any size for *sagiyas* and pump schemes. It only contained the ration of shares, co-owned by a deceased person, in proportion to an undefined area, bearing a specific *sagiya* number. Much survey work would be needed to show us the specific areas of all individual plots. Sharia courts would then have to be appointed to give decisions and issue their *ishhads* as to the division of the shares among the living in accordance with the Islamic law of inheritance. This was a very tedious and laborious procedure, which would require the courts to give retrospective decisions as to the division of shares among the heirs by stages down the ladder of descent until they came to the living heir. A similar procedure was required for date trees. Dwelling houses, shops and factory buildings had to be counted and assessed for compensation. All movable assets of a public

nature had to be dismantled — electric plant, railway track and workshops, telephone posts, water-supply engines and tanks and a complete floating dock. Office equipment and documents had to be packed. Our river fleet of about a dozen steamers and tugs had to be floated upstream through formidable cataracts where no vessel of such a size had ever ventured before. Every object that the eye could see posed its separate problem to me. Finally a social and economic survey had to be carried out to help the authorities in Khartoum to plan for the new home.

No time was lost; the preparatory plan was compiled and sent to Khartoum with a long list of items proposed for immediate census. On 26 January 1960 a ministerial decision was taken directing the Department of Statistics to carry out a series of social and economic surveys in the affected area. The object was to collect information which would be useful for the emigration and the resettlement of the displaced inhabitants. Specifically the survey should include the following censuses: of population, dwelling houses, furniture, household equipment and baggage in Halfa town; livestock in the town; furniture and livestock in the area (a sample), and sample surveys of income and expenditure and diet.

Soon after the decision was taken, Mr. J. G. Kleve and Sayed Abu Samra, both senior officials of the Department of Statistics, paid a flying visit to the area. They made a tentative inquiry and drew up their plan of work. They also made arrangements for office accommodation, their transport requirements and the recruitment of enumerators. At a meeting in my office the final plan for carrying out the operation was discussed and agreed. A week later, Sayed Abu Samra came to Wadi Halfa with a team of field inspectors and eight supervisors under his command, since he was the senior field inspector. Within a few days thirty-two men were recruited from the locality as enumerators. They were taught the elements of enumeration in a study course of nine days, including two days of practical training. They were shown how to get accurate answers to specific questions laid down in two questionnaire schedules for the population and a third one for the housing census. The first schedule, for the resident population, contained twenty-five questions aimed at eliciting personal information. The second schedule, containing only eleven questions, related to absentee citizens. Among the questions was whether the absentee was to be registered against a relative or had left a family behind, his country of abode, last visit to the area and number of dependents. The third schedule concerned houses, and the information would be used as a basis for the assessment and valuation boards. It included building type and material — whether it was of stone, mud brick or crude mud, or a



grass hut — area of the plot, number of rooms and how many persons were occupying each house and each room in the house. These questionnaire schedules were discussed in our meeting at Wadi Halfa, then checked by a group of ten volunteers from Khartoum University and finally edited on the spot by experienced staff from the Statistics Department.

From the beginning it was agreed that we had to start with the population and housing census as one operation then move by stages through each of the remaining items of the programme in succession until the whole job was finished. A target date for completing the whole job was fixed for the end of August 1961. The total cost of the whole operation was estimated at £S70,000, of which £S15,000 was budgeted as capital, the remainder being current expenditure. The transport fleet consisted of five Landrovers and four lorries.

Meanwhile I visited all the villages in the area, and held meetings there with the notables and leading personalities. I informed them of the survey we were to carry out and explained its purposes. I made it clear that the main object was to provide factual information and specific data essential for the planning of their future resettlement scheme and the steps leading to their safe emigration to it, wherever it was decided to be. I impressed on them the importance of accuracy in answering every question and urged them not to get bored with the length of the questionnaire or embarrassed by the personal nature of the inquiry. I then issued instructions to all *omdas* and village sheikhs urging them to give us their co-operation, and explaining that their attendance with the teams at the time of enumeration would be essential. The response to these meetings and instructions was favourable. It was now clear to me that the inhabitants were at least mentally prepared for the first phase in the long process of their emigration.

At the same time the census officers at Wadi Halfa were occupied filling in the details of their plan of work against the map of the area. Our native administration divisions were accepted as the basis for the enumeration units. The rural area was divided into fourteen *omodias*, and every *omodia* was divided into sheikhdoms, which consisted of so many villages. To serve their purpose, they further divided every village into quarters and every quarter into houses, and each house bore a consecutive number which was considered as the smallest unit. The definition of a 'house' for census purposes was simply a place of abode enclosed by walls. Mosques and school boarding houses, hospitals and commercial buildings were excepted. The 'family' was defined as a collection of individuals living in one house and eating from the same pan. If two wives were married to one husband and eating from different pans each was considered a separate family. The husband

would be registered against his second wife, while his first wife would be assumed to be the head of her family.

On 22 February the last preparation was complete. The staff were divided into eight teams, each composed of one supervisor and four enumerators, working under the instruction of a field inspector. They were allotted to their respective work areas in the field. Their equipment and stationery were packed and loaded on to lorries, and in the afternoon they were sent to take up their posts in the rural areas and get ready to start their job early next morning. It was decided that the operation should begin from the north at the village of Faras, moving southwards until it ended at Kosha opposite to Dal cataract.

Next day, at sunrise, the enumerators could be seen moving from house to house, like milk sellers, knocking at the gates, questioning heads of families and filling in their forms. At 9 o'clock I followed them to make sure that things were going smoothly: everything was to my satisfaction. I got to know from the field inspectors that the inhabitants received them kindly and that they were not only co-operative but also generous. The housing census had attracted special interest among the inhabitants, who mistook it for the final evaluation for compensation purposes and so kept arguing that a kitchen was not a kitchen but a living room and that a stable had to be considered as a guest room. In Ashkeit it was being argued that newly-laid foundations of houses were to be reckoned as completed houses. When I explained the situation to them, they were satisfied and never raised such arguments again during the census. Perhaps these kept them in store for the evaluation and assessment boards when they made their visits later. That day I returned to Halfa in good spirits. The census operation had begun successfully. It was indeed a remarkable event, the first of the steps that were to take the Nubians to their new home at Khashm el Girba.

For days the enumeration proceeded from one area unit to the other. When an area was covered, the questionnaire forms were collected for coding at the statistics office in Wadi Halfa. Once all the forms were coded, they were sent to Khartoum for punching and analysis at headquarters. When the enumerating of the population and houses was finished a start was immediately made with the census of furniture and household equipment, beginning again from Faras.

By mid-July I had the pleasure of receiving a photographed copy of the tabular survey for the rural area, and in August I was furnished with a similar copy for the town. The final report was published in May 1961, under the signature of Sayed Ahmed Osman Ishag, Director of the Department of Statistics.

The census report was a very valuable document. The facts conveyed

in its tables melted away all the clouds of ignorance and for the first time we had a clear view of the situation. The figures were grouped into forty-two tables for the rural area and thirty-eight for the town, with four graphs. Yet more interesting were the analytical comments: figures were compared and discussed in relation to each other. So as not to bore the reader, it will suffice here to stick to the highlights of the results, giving my own remarks only as necessary.

The report gave the total number of residents in the affected area as 38,478, including 11,056 for Wadi Halfa town. Compared with 36,029 for the 1955/6 census, the increase of 2,449 was too slight to be worthy of notice. The report therefore considered the population static, and attributed this to emigration. The birth rate for the area exceeded the death rate by 39.6 per 1000 for the rural area and 30.8 per 1000 for the town. Again comparing these figures with 33.2 per 1000 for the whole of the Sudan, one can safely say that the element of stagnation observed was due to artificial rather than natural factors. The large number of absentees (14,796) also confirms this conclusion.

The distribution in the sex and age group tables was surprising. In all villages without exception, the number of females exceeded that of males by a high proportion. Sarra East, Ashkeit, Argin, Faras West and Akasha were all quite distinct in this general imbalance. Sarra East claimed a record in having twice as many females as males. The overall division of sex in the area showed 15,562 females as against 11,860 males. Nearly half the male population in the age group 15–20 was absent. This figure, of course, included all students at secondary school and above, attending classes in Khartoum or elsewhere. On the whole there were more children than adults, due to the high birth rate. Hence the village populations are dominated by women and children.

The marital status table gave a total of 4,165 wives with husbands living in the area and 1,946 wives with husbands outside the area. The number of divorced wives was 383 with a high proportion in the 20–40 age group, while the number of divorced men was only 85. The analysis related this to the fact that divorced men marry again while divorced women have little chance to find a second husband. For the same reason it was observed that the widowed men (109) were mostly aged 60 or over. The marriage age in Nubia started at 11–15 for females and at 16–20 for males, rising up to a peak in the age group 31–40. At the age of 60 and over the number of married females was only one-fifth that of males.

The number of absentees in the rural area was given at 14,431; as far as the villages were concerned, their number more than made up for the overall shortage of males. Sarra East, Argin, Faras West, Ashkeit and Sarra West all had more absentees than residents. In Degheim,

Gemai, Faras East, Akasha and Kosha the ratio was only about 50 percent. Strangely enough, Dawashat had the minimum percentage of absentees. Checking this with the distribution of sex and age groups for residents, I could deduce that on the whole the emigration in Degheim, Gemai and Dibeira was of whole families, while in general the emigration only affected the able-bodied males and broke up the families.

The table dealing with literacy revealed that the area enjoyed a higher level than any other part of the whole Sudan. In the young group (6–15), the ratio was 75 percent for males in both rural area and town and 39 and 45 percent for females in the rural area and town respectively, as against 28 percent for males and 8 percent females of the same age group at national level. Over the age of 16, the percentage of literacy for male and female was 53 and 13 for the town and 55 and 21 for the rural area. Compared with 22 and 3 for the whole Sudan, these figures reflect the good level of education in Nubia.

The survey of the occupational groups revealed that out of 4,700 persons engaged in agriculture 1,512 were females. The latter figure was striking as it showed the high ratio of working women in Nubia compared with the country as a whole, and bore evidence to the good position enjoyed by women in Nubian society.

The classification of income earners per household, in relation to income from abroad, showed that there were 2,685 families depending on income from outside and 3,590 families which could manage on their local revenue. Families with income earners received no assistance from outside, while those without earners received it.

The result of the housing census which virtually filled 28 detailed tables can be summarised as follows: In the whole area there were 7,676 houses. Of these 821 were of stone, 97 of mudbrick and 6,192 of crude mud, while there were 567 grass huts. Large houses numbered 1,740, medium-sized houses 3,811 and small houses 1,125. The average number of rooms per house was 5.8 in the town and 4.7 in the rural area. The number of residents per room was 0.9 in the town and 1.1 in the rural area.

The purpose of the household equipment and furniture census was only to enable me — that is to say the Commissioner for Emigration — to determine, with the assistance of the local railway authorities, the number of railway waggons and trains necessary to transport the baggage of the inhabitants to their new home when the emigration actually took place. To find this out, I held several meetings with the railway inspector Sayed El Dirdiri el Sawi and the senior field inspector of the Department of Statistics, Sayed Abu Samra. We agreed that we first had to list the commonest items of furniture and household

equipment used by the Nubians in the rural area and the town and then reduce each item to a proportion of a metric ton. Once that factor was obtained the load of a railway waggon of  $10 \times 2 \times 2\frac{1}{2}$  m. volume could easily be calculated. This criterion, which was established for the furniture census, aimed at quoting all the household baggage of the area in terms of railway waggons. It was further agreed that as long as the standard of living of the inhabitants in the rural area was nearly uniform, no actual overall count was necessary and the sampling method would serve our purpose. But in the town, where the standard of living varied greatly, a detailed count had to be made.

The result came in two long tables for each area, one showing the figures of all items of domestic equipment while the other and more important one gave me the number of wagons needed for each village and quarter of the town separately. The figures were put at 1,206 for the rural area and 601 for the town.

The figures for the livestock census were tabulated in a separate report dealing with income and expenditure in the area. The report was very informative about the domestic economy of the Nubians. It served as a good background for planning the economic aspects of the resettlement scheme, and in Wadi Halfa we found it useful in arranging the time-table for payment of compensation. Suffice it here to quote the figures for livestock, which were needed for the emigration.

The area had 19,315 sheep, 34,146 goats, 2,831 head of cattle, 86 horses, 415 donkeys and 608 camels. As for poultry there were 35,000 chickens, 28,000 pigeons and 1,564 ducks and geese. Later, when the new home had been chosen, a veterinary inspector visiting Wadi Halfa found that the cattle and camels of the Nubians were inferior to those of Kassala Province, and so advised us to get rid of them. Consequently I obtained export licences which enabled the owners to sell them in Egypt at a good price.

Thus we ended this survey of the census operation which the Department of Statistics carried out efficiently and with a high degree of accuracy within a very short space of our valuable time. It had undoubtedly provided us with an encyclopaedia of information about the area which proved invaluable in planning the emigration and resettlement of Wadi Halfa.

At the same time as the census operation, I appointed seven committees for the enumeration of date and fruit trees in the area, presided over by administrative officers experienced in fieldwork and with a fair knowledge of listing date trees. Two members were affiliated to each committee from the locality as well as a clerk. The Department of Horticulture, on request, had sent us seven Shaigia men from Merowe with outstanding experience in sorting out date trees by

families. Moreover all village *sheikhs* and *sagiya samads* were instructed to attend the counting.

In a meeting with the committee it was agreed that the tax lists of the local councils which contained only the number of female bearers should be used only as a guide for the identification of *sagiyas* and the owners. In the meantime the traditional classification of date trees into the four families of Bartamouda, Gondeila, Barakawi and Gaw was adopted. For compensation purposes, all trees were divided into the following categories, according to age and sex:

1. *Bearing trees*: All bearing females including young females of five years of age – normally 1 metre high from the core of the foliage (*golgol*) to the surface of the ground.
2. *Non-bearers*: Includes all males and very old females that had become barren.
3. *Independent shoots*: Shoots of three to four years of age, just under maturity, planted in separate pits.
4. *Small shoots*: Include all shoots of one to three years of age in separate pits.
5. *Baby shoots*: Shoots attached to their mother's roots and suitable for nursing.

Lateral branches protruding from the stem of a mother tree were to be excluded.

After this procedure was completed, the forms were printed and the enumeration proceeded smoothly, covering nearly two-thirds of the area, when the serious incidents of 22 October (to be related later) interrupted its progress for three months. The final results were submitted to me in mid-July 1961. The totals were as follows: 372,749 bearing trees, 256,104 non-bearers, 28,807 independent shoots below maturity, 28,939 small shoots and 198,258 baby shoots. In addition 7,422 citrus trees and 3,540 other fruit trees were counted. There were thus ten bearing trees to each person in the area. In cash terms their produce would produce a revenue of £S7.5 per head per annum.

These figures give an idea of the amount of work done by the committees, who covered the whole area on foot counting, sorting and sometimes measuring young trees. For this reason it was a long process, but the result justified the time and energy expended.

Meanwhile I gave serious attention to the land problem. After much effort, our surveyors established the areas of all *sagiyas*, and thus our register was complete. But to add to our troubles it was discovered that the agricultural land of the two *omodias* of Batn el Hajar, limited as it was, had never been surveyed or registered. To fill the gap, a complete land settlement and registration operation had to be undertaken

without delay. Sayed Farah Shorbagi, a former commissioner of lands, was appointed Commissioner for Settlement of all agricultural lands of all the villages of these two *omodias*. Eventually he arrived in the area, accompanied by a team of surveyors and chainmen, and equipped with a copy of the Koran for administering the oath, he started work in December 1961. By March 1962 our register was complete and ready for the Sharia judges who were expected to arrive shortly and start the division of the shares and *geirats*\* among the living heirs.

In order to complete the preparations for the Sharia courts, a notice had to be published in the *Sudan Gazette* and leading international newspapers inviting all absent persons who might have any claim for compensation for land, date trees or house property to send in their petitions to the Commissioner for Emigration at Wadi Halfa no later than July 1960. Soon after this was done, a stream of letters flowed into my office from Nubian emigrants. Most of these petitions naturally came from Cairo where there was a large Nubian community; a large number also came from Lebanon. Surprisingly, I also received letters from Nubians living in the United States and in London, Liverpool and Swansea. Two notable letters came from Sydney, Australia, and Bombay. When I checked the contents of these letters with the petitioners' relatives, the latter were astonished to hear from some of them. I was informed that some of these emigrants had been absent for decades, and were believed to have died long since. However I kept these letters in the appropriate file for the Sharia courts.

The court's sittings followed soon afterwards. Two courts were appointed, presided over by Sheikh Hassan el Tayeb and Sheikh Ali Salih — both former Sharia judges — assisted by two deputies and clerks. As the length of the court sessions in the villages depended, more or less, on the number and nature of the cases to be dealt with, we were not able to publish a strict timetable in advance. So we issued notice showing the order of villages to be visited, quoting the starting date only, and directed all claimants to submit their petitions to the courts whenever they would be available in the locality. To the Nubians, who were fond of making complaints, the great opportunity had arrived. A sense of grievance was widespread and was being encouraged by the exemption of tax duty; thus, with a court on their doorsteps everyone got hold of a piece of paper, inscribed his petition and waited for the courts. Thousands of petitions accumulated, and in consequence the work progressed very slowly. The court procedure was so complicated and the land register so out-of-date that the court, in

\* cf. 'carats'. Any unit is supposed to be 24 *geirats* — e.g. pure gold, which if adulterated with base metals contains fewer *geirats* of gold.

order to divide the share of a dead ancestor-owner among the living co-owners, had to decide on a chain of cases, each link of which was attached to another claim. In one case of inheritance the base of the pyramid became so wide that the court had to give twenty-seven retrospective decisions. Sheikh Hassan el Tayeb told me that in Saras twenty people came up to the court and demanded the division of their shares in a single date tree. The courts often found themselves swamped by petty cases, calculating shares in decimal points. For this reason I equipped the office with half-a-dozen calculating machines, which were a great help throughout the process of compensation.



## CHOICE OF THE RESETTLEMENT SITE: THE GROUNDWORK

Let me now turn to Khartoum and record the sequence of events following the visit of President Abboud to Wadi Halfa.

On 9 February 1960 the Council of Ministers' appointed a Commission for the Resettlement of Wadi Halfa inhabitants. This Commission was composed of five under-secretaries representing the Ministries of the Interior, Finance and Economics, Agriculture, Irrigation and Works, with Sayed Daud Abd el Latif, Governor of Kassala Province, as chairman. Since he was an administrator, a Nubian and a senior official in the civil service, the choice of Sayed Daud was a wise one.

The Commission was acting in an advisory capacity to the Minister of the Interior, with the following terms of reference: 1. to determine the method of development of the resettlement area, its division into plots and the required standard of dwelling houses to be built; 2. to determine the rates of compensation for land in the affected area and the principles for assessment of compensation; 3. allotment of plots in the resettlement area; 4. co-ordination between the government departments engaged in the development of the resettlement area and the transportation thereto of interested persons. In March the ordinance for the resettlement of Wadi Halfa people was passed by the Supreme Council, confirming these terms of reference.

Early in March the Commission considered suggestions for an alternative home for the inhabitants. Six sites were selected by the Commission to have their suitability for the proposed resettlement closely studied. The sites were Wadi el Khawi, in Dongola area; North of the Gezira Extension, to the south of Khartoum; El Kadaru area, north of Khartoum; Managil Extension, Gezira West; Wad el Haddad, near Sennar; and Khashm el Girba, in Kassala Province. The Commission directed all departments concerned to collect all necessary data

concerning each area separately to enable them to determine their suitability for the resettlement.

On 21 March 1961 Sayed Daud Abd el Latif paid his first visit to Wadi Halfa, as chairman of the Commission. He inspected the progress of the census survey and I had the opportunity to discuss with him our programme for listing date trees and the steps we were taking to bring our land register up to date. We then had a quick tour of the area, and visited nearly all the villages. On the 23 March Sayed Daud delivered a long address to a crowd of 3,000 in Wadi Halfa town. In the address he gave information about the programme of storage in the reservoir and said that in 1963 the first spate of the flood would rise to Contour 135, which meant that the town of Halfa would be submerged. The lake would continue rising until it reached the Contour 185, when the town would be 50 metres under water. He added that no reflux in the lake would be expected except in years of severe water shortage on the Nile, and even when it did occur the recess period would be too short to allow a harvest to take place. This, coupled with complete lack of cultivable land of any sort along the banks of the lake, would make any settlement in its vicinity impossible. Then Daud made the first public announcement of the six alternative sites, and gave a general outline of each, with the weather conditions, soil survey, irrigation and communications. Speaking of compensation, Daud said that the whole question would be studied in the light of conditions prevailing in the new home when the choice had been made. He ended by relating the great benefits to mankind of previous emigrations in the history of nations, quoting the Americans as a significant example.

This address had a conciliatory effect, and besides, it concentrated the scattered ideas of the inhabitants along definite lines of thought. Instead of Halfa and its date trees, they started talking about the merits and drawbacks of the alternative sites. In short, they became emigration-conscious.

As all the proposed sites had already been surveyed and studied by the British administration long before, there was no difficulty in collecting the information needed by the Commission. Kadaru area alone required a survey and soil analysis, and this was done in good time by the Survey Department and the Ministry of Agriculture. So on the departure of Sayed Daud from the district, all the facts and figures were known. The Commission then compiled a long memorandum containing the main facts about each area, as a guide for the final choice of the new home. The following is a summary of the main points.

1. *Wadi el Khawi*. This site is situated on the east bank of the Nile in Dongola District and extends from the village of Mulwad, opposite

Khandag, to Abu Fatma at the north boundary of the district. Except for three small villages, it is uninhabited. The main feature of this area is that it is semi-desert, marked with straggling sand hills and dunes, separated by disconnected flat clay patches of varying degrees of fertility. The clay belt is very shallow and in many places is no more than three feet deep. Add to this the high salt content at some points which will call for unending efforts at reclamation.

The total area of cultivable land in these scattered patches is estimated at 139,000 *feddans*, only irrigable by pumps, with all the cost and depreciation this would involve. Yet the rate of water seepage in the soil is so high that to irrigate it, all the canals have to be lined with concrete.

The weather is dry throughout the year, with a big variation in temperature between winter and summer, which makes it similar to Wadi Halfa. As the land is vacant, no endemic diseases are believed to exist in the area, but the neighbourhood is infested with bilharzia, ankylostomiasis and malaria, which are expected to communicate to the area when it is inhabited.

The main crops to be grown in Wadi el Khawi are wheat, barley, horse beans (*lubia*), peas, chickpeas, lupins and all varieties of desert date trees. In addition to this, vegetables and fruits, castor and jute are expected to give good results.

Socially, the neighbourhood is inhabited by the Danagla and Mahas who are Nubians – akin to the Halfa people.

2. *Kadaru area.* This site lies at the northern reach of Khartoum Province. Its area is estimated at 55,000 *feddans* of flat country with heavy alluvial soil with a high sodium content. In some places the soil is mixed with a large proportion of sand and gravel. Its fertility is assessed as below third-class level and, like Wad el Khawi, it is only irrigable by pumps.

This site can possibly be extended to include an additional area of 80,000 *feddans* on the east bank of the Blue Nile, south of Kadaru. But the soil there is equally poor and the area is thickly populated, besides which the acquired rights of the local inhabitants would make the problem of acquisition a difficult one.

The weather conditions in this area are similar to those of Khartoum, with moderate rainfall. There is a possibility of growing wheat, barley, cowpeas, *barseem*, *dura*, onions and castor, but the Ministry of Agriculture gave a warning that the expected yield would not be profitable.

The neighbourhood is inhabited mostly by the Jaaliyin and Batahin tribes, whose chief occupation is animal husbandry.

3. *North of the Gezira.* This site is situated at the north-west tip of the

Gezira irrigated area, extending between the Abu Guta scheme and Kab el Jidad division. Its area is 60,000 *feddans*. The soil texture is heavy alluvium with a high percentage of sodium salt in the middle belt, but near Kab el Jidad and Abu Guta, the area is skirted with soil of first and second-class fertility. The whole area might be irrigated from the Managil extension. Crops have to follow the Gezira rotation of cotton — *dura* — cowpeas.

The weather is similar to that of Kadaru, with heavier rainfall. This area is susceptible to malaria and bilharzia from the neighbouring irrigated schemes.

The inhabitants of Abu Guta and Kab el Jidad divisions cordially welcomed the prospect of Nubian resettlement in that area.

4. *The Managil Extension*. This area had already been scheduled for development as an extension to the Managil scheme. It covers an area of 130,000 *feddans* of first grade fertility. The crops therefore have to follow the traditional rotation.

The weather is similar to that of the middle belt of the Gezira, with 350 mm of rainfall. Malaria and bilharzia are endemic here.

The inhabitants are not as cordial as those of Kab el Jidad, as they opposed Nubian resettlement in their area.

5. *Wad el Haddad*. This site comprises about 40,000 *feddans* of first-grade fertility. It is situated at the southern end of the Gezira scheme and can be irrigated by pumps from the Managil main canal. Traditional crop rotation, in addition to expected success of vegetables and fruit. Weather conditions in this area are similar to those of the Gezira, but with heavier rainfall.

This area is infested with malaria, bilharzia and kala-azar. Being mainly inhabited by westerners from Chad, this area is also exposed to sporadic outbreaks of smallpox and relapsing fever.

6. *Khashm el Girba*. The proposed scheme for this area included all the northern reach of the Butana plain, an area of half a million *feddans* of land along the western bank of the river Atbara extending from the village of Khashm el Girba in the south-east to Goz Rajab in the north-west. It is dead flat country, with light clay soil. The soil analysis showed that most of the area is of first-class fertility, with a gradual deterioration towards the north-west, but at its worst the grade does not fall below second-class. The area would be irrigated by a main canal fed by the proposed dam at the river gorge of the village of Khashm el Girba. The settlement would be allotted 125,000 *feddans* in any part of this scheme. Wheat, cotton, *dura*, sugar cane, jute and castor, as well as fruits and vegetables, were expected to produce good results. The weather conditions were moderate throughout the year, with only slight variations between the winter and summer temperatures. The

mean readings gave 26° C for January and 32.5° for May. The average rainfall was 390 mm.

Bilharzia was endemic, and syphilis was common among the nomadic tribes who roamed the area. Being close to Gedaref reach, the area was expected to contract kala-azar when development was complete.

The nomadic tribes in the area were said to have mixed feelings towards the resettlement of the Nubians, but the leaders of the Shukria tribe were later to welcome the people of Wadi Halfa as neighbours.

In a supplementary note to this memorandum, the Commission added that at that time it had no considered plan for the development of communications in the proposed sites, but it intended to give its opinion on the feasibility of building an internal system of communications and linking the whole area with other parts of the country, when the site for resettlement had finally been decided. A further point was that since the problems of produce marketing and industrial development would depend more or less on the volume and quality of products to be grown, the geographical situation of the resettlement site and the state of communications within it, the Commission had decided to defer discussion on these matters until the final choice was made. The following comments may be of some interest to the reader.

First, I cannot imagine why the Commission included Kadaru in its list of alternatives. All the information given about this site suggested that it should be totally ruled out. The area was small and the soil sterile and incapable of producing any crop of value. Further, the land had no other potential of any sort to ensure subsistence for the inhabitants. Had there been any possibilities for agricultural development in this area, the leading owners of agricultural schemes of Khartoum, such as Sayed Ali el Mirghani, Abu el-Ila and Mohamed el Khaliga Sherif, would not have left it and established their schemes in remote areas, such as the Busta, Suki, Bunzuga, and Renk. The only advantage of this site over the others lay in its nearness to Khartoum, which would only be tempting to the well-to-do class of inhabitants who might be interested in investing their capital in commercial enterprises in Khartoum and living close to their places of business. But for the multitude of poor inhabitants who were looking forward to improvements in their standard of living, and better prospects by securing more land and enjoying its benefits, this site offered no hope. If the Commission had given such low priority to the necessity of agriculture, as a means of subsistence, why did it take the trouble to explore the whole Sudan investigating agricultural possibilities? The whole problem would then boil down to a question of residence, which might have been solved by planning an extension to the cities of Khartoum or Omdurman to accommodate the Nubians.

The mere inclusion of this site in the list of alternatives, despite all its drawbacks, naturally suggested its possibility for settlement. As we shall see later, this implication was widely exploited by the well-to-do class who tried to alter the choice to suit their own interests.

Secondly I very much regretted that the Commission had not considered communications and future industrial development for each area, with their feasibility, cost and chances of success. These points were very important, and an integral part of the information required for evaluating each site. Of the six sites under review, only Kadaru and Wad el Haddad had railway facilities. Wadi el Khawi was a remote area; had it been chosen for resettlement, it would have required hundreds of miles of rail track to link it with station No. 6 in the middle of the Atmur desert line, or alternatively, major works would have been needed to improve the 250-mile stretch of bad road, to provide for the export of dates to the traditional market in Egypt. This would no doubt have been more costly than the construction of the concrete canals. North Gezira extension and Managil had neither railway service nor good roads. At Khashm el Girba the construction of a railway line linking the area with the Khartoum-Kassala line had already been included in the plans for the scheme.

As for industry, only Khashm el Girba would have electric power (from the proposed dam) and sugar and ginning factories were planned. For other sites no such plans were contemplated and I could see no chance for them in the near future, as the amount of raw material produced by these areas would not warrant the establishment of big industries.

Had all these points been included in the memorandum, they would have made the whole picture clearer and made the final decision easier. But let us now return to Wadi Halfa and view the situation after the visit and address of Sayed Daud Abd el Latif, leaving the Nubians engaged in assessing the merits and demerits of the alternative sites in the light of the sketchy information he had given in his address. From the start, their outlooks differed. The diversity of their opinions tended to group them into camps, each assessing the situation in a way suited to his own interest. The Degheim people, who were the most sophisticated and well-off in the rural area, had confined their ambitions to the vicinity of Khartoum, and thus kept the pendulum of their thoughts swinging between the Kadaru area and the North Gezira Extension. A larger proportion of Ashkeit and Dibeira people favoured Khashm el Girba, while Saras, Akasha and a host of Dibeira people supported Wadi el Khawi. Argin and Faras were unanimously for the North Gezira Extension. Nobody spoke up for Managil, and nobody at that time opposed the emigration. The whole area was subjected to the

heat of conflicting propaganda which soon developed into definite tension. All this was taking place at the time the Commission was working out the details of its memorandum.

Early in April Sayed Daud held a press conference in Khartoum, in which he confirmed that the inhabitants would be given the freedom to choose their new home, and said that a local deputation would be invited to Khartoum to meet and discuss the problem with technical advisers, who would accompany them to all the sites, and release the full information collected by the Commission about each area. When this deputation had returned to Wadi Halfa, Daud went on to say, the local inhabitants would make their choice. He added 'The Commission will then compile a list of priorities for the six alternative sites and submit it to the Government for final decision.' This last sentence is worth noting. While the first part of the statement gave the impression that the choice by the inhabitants would be final, the last paragraph appeared to revoke this and to show that their choice would be taken as advisory only, the final decision resting with the Government. This represented a deviation from the promise given by President Abboud in his notable address at Wadi Halfa.

When I read this statement in the press I had the feeling that the Government had already decided to take the matter in hand, and that Daud, finding himself in a dilemma, had cleverly concocted this statement to prepare the minds of the inhabitants gradually for the final result. The inhabitants, on the other hand, being appeased by the first part of the statement, did not pay much attention to the conflicting meaning of the last, and so on the whole their reaction was favourable. As for the local committee which was to make the deputation, the press conference had inaugurated a critical period of trial, during which their ability to share in the responsibility for their own fate would be tested.

I think it is relevant to tell the reader something of the local committee, which played a short but conspicuous part in the events of this narrative.

In 1954, when the Egyptians decided to build the High Dam, the inhabitants of Wadi Halfa were on their guard, realising that their land and their future were at stake. The Sudan Government, who looked upon their agreement to the scheme as a powerful bargaining counter in the forthcoming negotiations over the Nile waters, entertained no objection to it. Yet they were aware of the hazards which would befall Wadi Halfa and its people as a result of their agreement. A special office was therefore created in the Ministry of the Interior for the assessment of likely damage and the submission of details of property to be lost, in money terms, so that the Government could have a firm basis for its

compensation claim against Egypt. This office was headed by Sayed Mohamed Khalil Biteik, a Nubian administrator, in his capacity as 'Commissioner for the High Dam'. At that time the local inhabitants obtained approval for the formation of a local committee to work closely with the Commissioner and assist him in his multifarious duties. But no sooner had the work begun than the negotiations began for the Nile waters. Our delegation, led by Mirghani Hamza, then Minister of Irrigation, at first made substantial progress in Cairo. The Sudan agreed to the building of the High Dam, and the Egyptians assented to the building of the Roseires Dam on the Blue Nile and the Khashm el Girba Dam on the River Atbara. It was further agreed that a joint committee should be set up to assess the amount of compensation which would be due for all the property to be lost under the reservoir lake in Sudanese Nubia. Unfortunately, on the question of division of the water shares, the negotiations faltered and finally broke down, as the result of which the local committee was dissolved. It should be mentioned here that the Khashm el Girba scheme was initiated at that time by Sayed Mirghani Hamza, to serve as a resettlement area for the displaced Nubians of Wadi Halfa.

When the agreement was finally concluded in 1959 and the fate of Wadi Halfa was sealed, the need was felt to create a local body to assist the Government in dealing with this great issue in their lives - to co-operate with local authorities in solving the countless problems involved in the liquidation of their immovable property and arranging for a safe evacuation. When President Abboud had announced his visit to Wadi Halfa, the inhabitants had seized that opportunity to set up a local committee on their own initiative. This was composed of many sub- or 'branch' committees, as they were called, selected at village level and each being offered a seat or seats in the central committee. The town likewise was divided into quarters, each with its own sub-committee. The central committee had forty-three members, and the number of sub-committee members ran to thousands. The central committee was presided over by Ahmed Sherif Daud, an estate owner in Wadi Halfa town, and its secretary was Abd el Rahim Mahmoud, a merchant from Degheim village. Although the whole set-up looked sound and good, I nevertheless felt that some important personalities were cast aside due to local prejudice.

On 19 April I received directions from the Commission urging me to select the proposed deputation and send it to Khartoum within three days. This news attracted big headlines in our local bulletin. Next day, the president and secretary of the local committee came to my office and submitted a list of fourteen names, which they claimed to have been selected by the local committee for the proposed deputation.



Looking at the names, I felt no objection to any one of them, but observed that the list came short of full representation of the villages, the educated class and other significant elements. Moreover, I could see that the supporters of Khartoum vicinities had been given an unduly high representation. I therefore informed them that I would accept their list, but reserved the right to add more names so as to make it more in keeping with the purpose of the intended mission to Khartoum and its important consequences. They refused to accept my point of view and said that since they were fully representative of the inhabitants, they would not agree to the appointment of any person other than those shown on their list, threatening to withdraw if I insisted. When they saw that I was sticking to my point, they left the office discouraged and disappointed. I could now see that in reality they were objecting to the inclusion of candidates who were not to their liking. This was a clear indication that local prejudices had begun to encroach upon the emigration issue. Next day I invited them to my office and after a long conversation they were convinced and eventually withdrew their opposition. Eight other members were added, bringing the total strength of the deputation up to twenty-two. Among those added were Sayed Ali Ahmed Ali to represent the educated class, Sayed Gereis of the Sukkot area which would be affected by the lake, and Sheikh Salih Isa Abdu 'Salhein', head of the native administration of the area. I further appointed Sayed Mohamed Ali Abd el Rahman, the executive officer of the rural council, to accompany them as liaison officer. On 21 April the deputation was seen off at Wadi Halfa railway station by a big and cheerful crowd.

On arrival in Khartoum, they paid a courtesy visit to the Palace where they had a friendly meeting with President Abboud. Ahmed Sherif made a long speech to which the President replied, assuring them that their problem was uppermost in his mind. He added that he had resolved to compensate them with a better home that would have modern planning, a good standard of services and a scheme of livelihood which would ensure a good standard of living for them and their descendants. He also informed them that he had already instructed all departments and ministries to concentrate their efforts and energies in building the Nubians' new home, and to give it priority over all other development schemes.

The deputation then held a meeting with the Commission, at which it gave access to all information about the proposed sites. A long discussion then followed with the technical advisers, who explained everything and answered questions. On 28 April, the deputation, accompanied by the technical advisers, started their tour of visits to the areas.

At Kadaru area the agricultural expert confirmed the defects of the soil and its unsuitability for agricultural development. He further informed them that the produce of the *sagiyas* of Khartoum North was the worst of which his ministry had records. The deputation then moved by car to the north extension of the Gezira. At Kab el Jidad village the inhabitants, who had gathered in a big crowd along the road, gave them a warm reception. They shouted slogans like 'Long live the Barabra, settle with us and develop the area from here to Khartoum.' The deputation drove across the plain which had been proposed for their resettlement, and then paid a short visit to the Faragin and Abu Guta divisions where they had a look at the tenants' settlements. Perhaps the good impression these settlements made, together with the good reception at Kab el Jidad, were noted with satisfaction by the Argin delegates. The attitude of the deputation towards Managil was one of indifference. It then went on by train to Wad el Haddad, where the presence of westerners who had settled there deepened their misgivings about the health and security situation in the area. After spending a short time at Gedaref, they continued their journey to Khashm el Girba. On their arrival in the village they had a short rest, after which they were taken straight to the site of the proposed dam, which was the first time most of them had seen the River Atbara. The Karab, a wide range of dunes of heavy soil, scarred and broken by deep gorges, and assuming strange shapes, had made a very unfavourable impression on them. 'They recalled to my mind the exile in which Prophet Solomon imprisoned his Jinns,'\* Omda Salhein said to me on his return, and when I saw them later I agreed. The deputation then made a fifty-mile tour across the proposed scheme area. It was a desolate flat country, devoid of any sign of life except for a wide expanse of twinkling mirage which wearied their eyes. They halted in the centre of the area to test its fertility. It was late in the dry season and there were no traces of grass. This aroused the doubts of Salhein, who asked about its barren state. Sheikh Mohamed Hamad Abu Sin, the Shukria *Nazir* who was accompanying them, replied that during the rainy season the whole area would turn green with rich pasture which could be grazed by their herds of camels. Salhein then said with a smile: 'I do not see any camel droppings to confirm that.' It was true that there were no camel droppings in that particular spot, but the *Nazir's* statement was honest and correct. Then Mohi el Din Mohamed Isa, who was a diehard for Wadi el Khawi and a sworn enemy of Khashm el Girba, argued hotly with the soil expert that he had

\* Jinns — a race of spirits or demons in Islamic mythology supposed to have the power of assuming human or animal form.

private and reliable information that the geological structure of the scheme area was composed of a thin sheet of soil only a foot deep, blanketing a solid stratum of basalt rock, and that he would wager his life if his statement, when tested, proved erroneous. The expert, evidently embarrassed, replied calmly that, had the case been as described, the Government would not have been so foolish as to invest so much national capital in developing that area. Then the deputation took a modern bus for the journey to Kassala town.

After a short bumpy trip over the Karab, followed by a smooth crossing of the Butana bridge on the River Atbara, the bus crossed a flat plain similar to Khashm el Girba, with the Kassala mountain on the horizon but growing more distinct as they passed El Hajiz and Malwia. Suddenly the scenery changed and their eyes were greeted by the beautiful green clusters of Kassala gardens, embracing the banks of the Gash River. At last here was a place that resembled the far-distant Wadi Halfa. Except for the dry course of the Gash at that season, everything they saw in Kassala was nourishing and refreshing. They stayed for a short period in that green town, then they took their bus for a seven-hour journey across the Butana plain, which was harsh and empty at that time of year, dotted only with even harsher dry acacia scrub, till they reached Khartoum. It was the first bus ever seen in that country and they had inaugurated unawares the first bus service between Khartoum and Khashm el Girba, their destined home.

Their trip to Wadi el Khawi was shorter and more comfortable. They took a chartered plane to Dongola, then reached Wadi el Khawi by car, had a look at the place and came back to Khartoum on the same day. On 7 May the deputation returned to Wadi Halfa.

During their absence the inhabitants had been following their movements with great interest, and speculating on the outcome of the journey. They were expecting that through meeting the Commission advisers, studying the details presented to them, visiting and seeing the alternative sites for themselves they would have arrived at a unanimous conclusion; but unfortunately the state of most of the delegates was no better when they returned than when they had left. It seemed that they had gone with closed minds, set on predetermined choices, so that all the information released to them by the Commission, and all that they had seen on their long fatiguing journey, had made no noticeable difference to their outlook. The only difference was perhaps that some of them could advance more points to support their own particular choice and more to criticise the rest. Some came up with fanciful plans for their favoured sites, such as building a dam on the Fourth Cataract south of Merowe or 500 km. of canal to irrigate Wadi el Khawi. Another scheme I heard of was the building of a new

Halfa city on the east bank of the White Nile, south of Khartoum and upstream from Jebel Awlia dam, where it would become the centre for the fish industry for the whole country.

On their return the members of the deputation met their supporters in the villages and related their impressions. The hesitation of the Degheim people was finally settled at a big meeting in the village, at which they decided to support the Kadaru area. A few days later Ahmed Sherif Daud came to my office and informed me that their 'Study Committee', consisting of deputation members, had met, considered all the important aspects of their visits to the proposed sites and issued a proclamation containing all the facts they had studied and the impressions they had received. He gave me a copy of the proclamation. I reviewed its contents and checked the facts against the Commission's memorandum which I had received during their absence. I found that points of fact were consistent, except for a discrepancy concerning the soil fertility of the Kadaru area. Their proclamation had graded it as first-class. I also noticed that the risk of kala-azar infection in Khashm el Girba was highly exaggerated. When I asked for the causes of these errors, I was made to understand that they had obtained the information from a certain relative of theirs serving in the Ministry of Agriculture. To add to my surprise I found out from Daud that instead of wholly trusting in the factual information in the memorandum, they had sought the opinion of their fellow civil servants working in the various government departments in Khartoum whom they regarded as their 'private experts'. This intensified my doubts and I became really disturbed. I replied to Daud that if some of them preferred to live in Khartoum, they could do so in the manner that would suit them, but to mislead the multitude of the poor inhabitants into choosing a barren area with no future could create a very serious and tragic situation. When he left my office, I published the official memorandum in our local bulletin and gave it a wide circulation in the villages, so that the inhabitants should know the facts as they stood from official sources.

A few days later the local committee fixed the target date for the selection of a site for 30 July. No sooner had the date been fixed than the whole area was stricken by clashing currents of propaganda which gradually mounted up and gained strength the closer we came to the deadline. The Degheim people, relying on their sophistication and traditional leadership of the rural area, in addition to the encouragement of the president and secretary of the local committee, were making great efforts to rally the whole population in support of Kadaru. Mohi el Din and his supporters could achieve no noticeable progress for Wadi el Khawi. Khashm el Girba supporters, on the other hand, were harassed by the powerful propaganda disseminated by the

three other camps together; they were saying that Khashm el Girba had been imposed on them by the Government previously in 1954, and to revive the idea, a large agricultural scheme was under way to justify its inclusion in the list of alternatives. To argue for Khashm el Girba therefore meant to agree with the Government's plan, and to support the Government essentially meant being unpatriotic; at least this was the theory of patriotism which had survived long after the British had left the Sudan. Then what about kala-azar, that dreadful disease, whose danger needed no exaggeration? After all they had the living example, Sheikh Abd el Rahim Ahmed Himmat of Semna village, who went with twenty colleagues in the 1920s to Gala el Nahal in the southern reach of Gedaref 'only about 320 km. from Khashm el Girba', to seek their fortune from cultivation there. They were attacked by this mortal disease and all twenty of his fellows succumbed one by one. Only by a stroke of good luck did he survive and come back to tell the tale. This disease, they were now saying, was marshalling its armies of germs and was waiting for their arrival to invade the whole area. Moreover, they went on to say that the neighbourhood was inhabited by Hadandawa tribes with fuzzy hair, swords and daggers and savage habits. The Zebeidia Arabs also lived near the area, and were not only primitive but cunning as well. Yet in spite of all these strong arguments which were widely repeated, the Khashm el Girba supporters at Ashkeit and Dibeira remained resolute in their choice.

Although the Degheim people could win to their cause some quarters of the town – mainly those inhabited by Sudanised Egyptians – with which they had not previously had good relations, they were still far short of victory. Realising that their efforts could fail, and that time was short, they changed their tactics and started manoeuvring. On 17 July, they invited some influential Argin sub-committee members to a meeting in the house of the *omda* of Degheim, obviously with the intention of inducing them to repudiate the North Gezira extension and support them. The members accepted the invitation and came to the house of the *omda*, where they found seventeen leading personalities, including the president and secretary of the local committee, awaiting them. A long discussion then ensued, in which they were subjected to all kinds of pressure and inducements to make them withdraw from their choice and support Kadaru. To all this the Argin members turned a deaf ear, and refused to submit. In the end the invited members returned to Argin to disclose what they described as an open conspiracy, planned by Ahmed Sherif and Abd el Rahim Mahmoud, to undermine their freedom of choice and tilt the scales in their favour. This incident aroused ill-feeling in Argin, and had unfavourable repercussions on the Wadi el Khawi and Khashm el Girba

camps, who were ignored by the Degheim people. When the local committee next met, the atmosphere was inflamed by defamatory remarks about the Degheim sub-committee members and specific accusations of breaches of neutrality committed by the president and secretary. The discussion was so heated that a large proportion of the members threatened to resign.

At the next meeting, the committee laid down the voting procedure to be followed for the final selection of the new home of Wadi Halfa. This was that: every member of a sub-committee should have one vote; each voter on the ballot day should write his choice on the ballot paper and insert it into the ballot box; at the end of the voting, the boxes should be sealed by the sub-committee and sent under police guard to the rural council headquarters at Wadi Halfa town; the votes should be counted by the local committee in the presence of the *omdas* of the area, and each sub-committee should have one choice determinable by the majority votes cast in its area (i.e. one committee, one vote); and the result should then be communicated to the District Commissioner for submission to the authorities in Khartoum.

On 29 July, at a short meeting with the police officer, we made all arrangements for sending policemen to the various polling stations with transport for the collection of the ballot boxes and their delivery to Wadi Halfa town. All these arrangements were put into effect on the same day and by sunset all the policemen and their cars were ready at their posts.

Then came the memorable 30 July. Fearing that I might be accused of interference, I kept strictly to my office and followed the reports which came in at intervals from the police stationed in the various villages. By 3 p.m. the poll was over. It seemed that the conduct of the poll had been satisfactory throughout the area except in Dibeira village, where an interesting incident occurred. The sub-committee there was divided into three camps, each with its own leader. Two of these camps supported Wadi el Khawi, but because of an old feud their leaders, Mohi el Din Mohamed Isa and Omda Daud Abd el Rahman, refused to amalgamate in spite of their common aim. On the eve of the poll a slight skirmish took place between the two sides as each was trying to gain followers at the expense of the other. Next day the quarrel delayed their appearance at the poll for some time. This offered a golden opportunity to Sheikh Mohamed Ahmed Awaad, the leader of the third camp, who supported the Gezira North extension. Seeing his opponents embroiled in their quarrel, he grabbed his chance, summoned his 237 supporters and made them cast their votes, together with forty-seven for Khashm el Girba. He scarcely allowed time for the eleven voters for Wadi el Khawi who were present to cast their votes,

then he quickly sealed the box, and handed it over to the police, who took it in good faith to Halfa town. When the other two camps cooled down and turned up to cast their votes, they were furious to discover the trick and sent an urgent complaint to the president of the local committee, who collected some members and hurried to Dibeira; they made a brief inquiry there and gave their decision in favour of Awaad, and that ended the matter.

The Aswalia and Eleigat Arabs, who were Sudanese Egyptians occupying the merchant quarter in Halfa town, abstained on the grounds that they were waiting for the outcome of the negotiations between the Sudan and Egypt about the future port on the bank of the lake to replace Wadi Halfa.

At six o'clock in the evening all the branch committees had met in the town council chamber where the votes were counted. Instead of counting the votes of each sub-committee separately to ascertain its individual choice, they counted all the votes as a whole. The result was as follows:

	<i>Votes</i>
Kadaru area	2,006
North Gezira Extension 'South of Khartoum'	1,354
Wadi el Khawi 'Dongola'	783
Khashm el Girba	349
Sennar	2
Managil	—
Abstentions	126

In addition, two votes were cast advising that the whole question should be referred to the Government for its final decision. It is worth mentioning here that the Degheim local committee alone had 1,125 votes, of which 964 were for the Kadaru area.

These results came as a very unpleasant surprise to the Argin people, but they discovered that the committee had carried out the counting in a way that contravened the principles to which they had formally agreed. Those principles gave each committee one vote, instead of each individual vote being counted, so they accused the committee office and the members of Degheim village of a breach of faith and demanded that the voting should be considered null and void and that each sub-committee should be given one choice. They were soon followed by the other committees who supported them. A real crisis was in the making. They threatened to withdraw if matters could not be rectified and the counting of votes were not carried out in the agreed form. The committee office could find no excuse for its breach of the agreement, and so had no alternative to submitting to these demands.



A fresh counting was therefore carried out with each sub-committee having one vote. The results are shown below.

1. *North Gezira Extension*

Won the majority of votes of the following sub-committees:  
Argin, Dawashat, Dabarosa, Ashkeit, Dibeira, Sarra East, Sarra West, Faras East and the El Jebel quarter of Wadi Halfa town.

2. *Kadaru area*

Gemei, Degheim, Abbasia quarter, Hai el Arab, Basalwa quarter and Faras West.

3. *Wadi el Khawi*

Akasha, Saras, Arkawit, El Nuba.

Next morning at 9 o'clock Ahmed Sherif Daud, the president of the committee, reported at my office, handed me a document showing the results of the two sets of voting and briefed me on what had taken place the previous night. He informed me that the committee had approved the choice of the North Gezira Extension and requested me to communicate the fact to Khartoum.

Here I hope to complete the picture by giving my own observations and comments. The organisation of the committee was rather strange, especially at sub-committee level. The number of members in each sub-committee was very large, compared to the local 'central' committee. In a small village like Saras the number was 431 and in El Jebel quarter, which was a small settlement in the town, it was 165. At Degheim village, the largest in the rural area, it reached an astonishing 1,120. One wondered if any of these sub-committees had ever met before the polling day. Moreover, the distribution of seats in relation to the village populations was based on a superficial guess rather than scientific study. Had the committee been interested to know, we could have provided them with the census record of 1955/6, but it seemed they preferred to distribute seats as it suited them, and so they fell into odd anomalies such as that of giving the Basalwa and El Jebel quarters an almost equal number of seats, in spite of their big difference in population, and giving Saras a bigger number of seats than Argin.

The second criticism was that these sub-committees were appointed before President Abboud's visit to the area. At that time their representation of their respective villages was quite in order and could not be contested. But the visit of Sayed Daud and the offer of the alternative sites, with the visit of their deputation to Khartoum and the proposed sites, had no doubt brought about significant changes in the outlook of the inhabitants towards their future home, and this had involved the breaking up of the unity of the village into groups and quasi-groups according to their reaction to the proposed localities for their resettlement. It was therefore quite logical to consider the



necessity of dissolving the whole structure of the local committee and substituting for it an organisation that would meet the requirements of the new situation. It was unfortunate that nothing of this sort had already been set up and that the different viewpoints of the citizens were not accurately represented at sub-committee level. At Dibeira and Ashkeit, for instance, where the majority of the tenants favoured Khashm el Girba, there was only meagre representation of this view in the sub-committee.

A third point to ponder was the peculiar status of the sub-committees in the election. They were considered neither general electors nor an electoral college. Had they been general electors, the right to vote ought to have been extended to all other inhabitants, in which case the six sites ought to have been put to a general referendum throughout the area. On the other hand, if they had been considered an electoral college, then they themselves ought to have been elected by the villagers and not simply chosen by intuition.

The reader may ask why we did not interfere to set matters right, since we were aware of all these defects. My answer is that the selection of the proposed site was a purely local affair, and the smallest interference from the side of the local authorities, however noble their intentions, might be expected to call forth accusations concerning the government's intentions. The sophisticated class was deeply prejudiced and sensitive over any government intervention. Moreover, the local committee had insisted from the start on its competence to shoulder the responsibility and the Government thought it wise that they should have a chance. Perhaps it was through fear that the committee might misuse that privilege that the Government later reserved the right to make the final choice itself.

Now let us consider the actual results of the voting, in spite of my criticism on points of procedure. It was clear from the figures that no camp had won an over-riding majority over the others — none had even won half the votes. The result, in my opinion, was too pale to show any distinct colour and too dilute to give any taste. It had definitely miscarried. The Argin people and their allies clapped their hands for their victory, and Degheim and their satellites brooded for a while over their defeat, then made a virtue of necessity by accepting North Gezira Extension, saying that it was a matter of the lesser evil. I then recorded my comments and sent them with the result to the Commission in Khartoum, saying that though the result could not be taken as a strict expression of the wishes of all the inhabitants, yet it could serve as a guide to show their tendencies and inclinations, and I requested that it should be given the consideration it deserved. In the result Sayed Daud Abd el Latif found a loophole to start working for the choice of Wadi el

Khawi, which he considered the ideal place for the resettlement of the Halfa people.

After the voting was over and the result was communicated to Khartoum, we had a quiet period, in which I could pursue my activities in the census, the enumeration of date trees and in solving the land problem. The inhabitants, too, were able to resume the normal calm of their life, though they awaited the reaction from Khartoum with keen expectation. One day, while I was in my office compiling the monthly progress report, the telephone rang and the voice of Daud boomed out, telling me that he was sending a certain Mr. Alvin Scaff, an expert from the United Nations,\* to Wadi Halfa by plane, with instructions to go to Wadi el Khawi to make a soil survey and report on the feasibility of developing a livelihood scheme there for the resettlement of the Wadi Halfa people. He directed me to arrange for his transportation from Halfa to the site by car and to cope with his needs for the journey. I was astonished at this turn of events and began to wonder whether the Government had already taken a decision in favour of Wadi el Khawi. Although Daud said nothing to me that confirmed or denied this suspicion, I kept the news of the mission as secret as possible for fear of causing a sensation among the inhabitants. But the news leaked out through the Nubian telephone exchange operators, who were in the habit of eavesdropping on important calls, and later it was confirmed by the Land-rover driver who took Mr. Scaff to Wadi el Khawi. After the return of Scaff to Khartoum I received at my office some representatives from Degheim and Argin villages who were worried and disturbed. They expressed their doubts and suspicions about the mission of Mr. Scaff, and then asked me earnestly whether the Government had already decided to move them to Wadi el Khawi. I replied that I had no information of any government decision in respect to any specific area, but that my own interpretation of Mr. Scaff's mission was that the Commission wanted to find out certain points about Wadi el Khawi before it could submit its list of priorities to the Government for the final decision. One of them grumbled that if the Commission intended to submit a priority list that differed from the voting results, he could not understand why the Government referred the matter for their choice at all. I then referred him to Sayed Daud's press conference, published in *El Ayam* newspaper, of which I had a cutting in one of my files. They read it one after the other and I had the impression that they were beginning to feel the weight of its last

\* Mr. Alvin Scaff was an American expert working in the Sudan, who was invited by Sayed Daud Abd el Latif through the American Embassy.

paragraph. It reaffirmed their misgivings and they left my office in very low spirits.

Following that meeting, rumours spread through the whole area. People were saying that the Government had already ignored their wishes and decided on Wadi el Khawi. Everywhere morale was low, especially in Degheim and Argin villages. In Dibeira, Mohi el Din and Omda Daud Abd el Rahman had recovered from their setback and, encouraged by the chorus of rumours, had started to grind their axes and rally their people in support of the presumed decision. Mr. Scaff contributed further to this unhappy state of affairs by making two more visits to Wadi el Khawi. In conversation with him I touched lightly on the repercussions that his visits to Wadi el Khawi were having in the Halfa area. He laughed and told me that he had made a tentative soil survey at Wadi el Khawi to test its suitability for a livelihood scheme for the resettled Wadi Halfa people; having completed his mission he thought the scheme was feasible.

I should like to mention briefly the circumstances that caused Mr. Scaff's mission to Wadi el Khawi to be initiated, and which later contributed no less to the fate of Sayed Daud as a civil servant. Sayed Daud was a Nubian, born in Degheim village and brought up in the affected area. All his relatives and his property were involved in the great crisis which would soon engulf the whole district, and like any Nubian, he had his own reactions, inclinations and point of view on the crisis. The only difference was that he had gained knowledge and experience through his service in different parts of the Sudan denied to most of his fellow-Nubians. His chairmanship of the Commission had offered him a window through which he could get a wider and more distinct view of the whole situation, enabling him to use his knowledge, experience and aspirations to choose a suitable place for the resettlement of his own people. It was no secret to me that Daud was inclined for Wadi el Khawi: on his first visit he gave me some hints as to his line of thought. He believed that Wadi el Khawi had certain merits which would give it competitive advantages over the rest of the sites and make it ideal as a home for the Nubians. In the first place, the Nubians had become accustomed to dry weather, with all its extremes, and adjusted their mode of agriculture, with its different rotations of crops and date trees, to suit it. Daud also believed that the construction of their houses would be cheap. At Wadi el Khawi, where there was no rainfall, crude mud or brick houses could be built on the same pattern as in their existing villages, instead of the costly concrete or stone houses which would have to be built on the other sites. In addition, as they would be living within the community of the Mahas and Danagla, who were essentially Nubians, they would not lose their social contacts.

In all these aspects, I think the conceptions of Sayed Daud's ideas were absolutely sound and correct. But there were also major defects to be considered: in particular, the high cost of pump irrigation, coupled with the high rate of seepage in the soil, which would make it necessary to build all the canals with reinforced concrete, and the difficulty of transport which would involve heavy expenditure to link the area either by road to the new port or by means of a long railway line with the main line to Khartoum. All this expenditure might outweigh the advantage in the cost of housing.

But in spite of his reasonable argument about the favourable environmental conditions and social advantages of the neighbourhood, Sayed Daud's intentions were defeated by his own people. The results of the vote showed that the inhabitants cared little about the climate or who would be their neighbours. Instead they looked hopefully south towards the rain belt. All these defects of Wadi el Khawi were certainly known to Daud and so he tried to find ways of reconciling them. Thus, getting no positive response from his own advisers in the Commission, he called for foreign assistance, in the person of Mr. Scaff of the American Embassy. The inhabitants speculated about Mr. Scaff's mission for some time, but Khartoum kept silent for so long that the expectancy of the inhabitants was nearly exhausted.

## CHOICE OF THE RESETTLEMENT SITE: DECISION AND REACTION

On 10 October a rumour was circulated to the effect that the Government had decided on Khashm el Girba. At first it spread slowly and people took little notice. By 14 October it had gathered strength and developed into a torrent that flooded the whole area. I investigated its source and understood that the news had been communicated by telephone from certain private individuals in Khartoum to others in Halfa. From its effect on the people and their belief in the reliability of its source I could judge that it might have an element of truth. It seemed that they were so disappointed and disgusted, and so completely convinced of the bad news, that nobody bothered to check its reliability at my office. By mid-day Salhein came and told me in a matter-of-fact tone that the people were seriously worried about the Government's decision on Khashm el Girba. I told him I had no official news, and asked him about his source. He replied, 'There is no smoke without a fire'.

I felt that I was caught by the rumour too, and so I put a telephone call through to the Commission, but after a few moments the telephone rang. I heard the voice of the late Dr. Mohamed Ahmed Ali, Minister of Health, who must have been calling me at exactly the same time. He disclosed the fateful news to me, saying that the Council of Ministers, after due consideration of all aspects of the proposed areas and after careful study of all the reports submitted by local and international experts, had chosen Khashm el Girba as the most suitable place for the resettlement of the Wadi Halfa people. He added that a ministerial deputation would be visiting Wadi Halfa shortly to announce the decision to the inhabitants. I was really nerve-racked at that moment, and told him that the decision was no longer a secret to the people, who had somehow got to know of it days before. Feeling was very bitter against the Government. To send a ministerial deputation in that

atmosphere was like showing a red rag to a bull. I said I expected the ministerial deputation to be very badly received, and that I saw no reason for sending it to a place where it would be scorned and shouted at. As long as the mission's purpose was to convince the inhabitants of the wisdom of the decision, I suggested that it would be better if I sent a deputation from Wadi Halfa to Khartoum, to meet the authorities there. Either they would be convinced and could face their own people on their return and assuage their doubts, or they might be able to persuade the Government to change its decision. In any case the visit of the ministers was highly undesirable at that juncture. Dr. Mohamed listened attentively and said that he could understand the situation. He then advised me to write a letter to General Bahhari, the Minister of the Interior. That ended our conversation. So, finally, the die was cast, and everybody had to face the situation squarely. I began to think seriously of the perils of possible civil disorder which could result from these provocative events. I rang Daud and gave him a full report of the situation.

To contact General Bahhari, I had first to communicate with Sayed Hassan Ali Abdalla, the under secretary in the Ministry of the Interior, who was my immediate superior in security matters. I got hold of him on the telephone and related to him my conversation with Dr. Mohamed Ahmed Ali, and I gave him my own impressions of the vulnerable security situation and the probably unfavourable repercussions of the proposed visit. I told him that demonstrations and rioting were likely. Finally I requested him to impress on Bahhari the need to defer the visit and adopt my suggestion as a compromise solution. Sayed Hassan said that he had noted my points and would submit a report to the minister. In the afternoon I compiled a comprehensive report on the situation, and addressed it to the Commission, with copies to the Ministry of the Interior and the Governor, Northern Province. I also wrote a private letter to General Bahhari on the same theme, requesting him to do his best to convince his colleagues to defer their intended visit.

We had a spell of four days during which I was hopeful that my contacts with Khartoum would improve the situation and that wisdom might ultimately urge the Council of Ministers to cancel their visit.

On 18 October General Bahhari called me by telephone, and said that he had received my letter and report, and the note submitted to him by Sayed Hassan Ali Abdalla, and that he had informed the Council of Ministers of their contents. He continued that while he appreciated the excited state of the inhabitants, which had been aggravated by the choice of Khashm el Girba, the President had decided, in order not to repudiate and lose touch with them at that

critical moment, that the visit of the deputation should go ahead as scheduled, on 22 October. He then told me that the deputation would be composed of General Talaat Farid, the Minister of Information and Labour, himself, General Magbul el Amin, the Minister of Agriculture, and Dr. Mohamed Ahmed Ali, the Minister of Health. They would be accompanied by Sayed Daud Abd el Latif, the chairman of the Commission, and representatives from the Ministry of Irrigation and Agriculture. To my surprise he went on to say that he wanted me to arrange public receptions for them in the airport, in Halfa town, and in the villages of Degheim, Argin, Ashkeit, Dibeira, Sarra and Faras, and that within two days General Farid would be sending a mission of technicians from his ministry to Wadi Halfa by a special plane in order to install a local broadcasting station and to distribute seventy-five radio sets as gifts to inhabitants of the villages, to enable them to hear the announcement about their new home. I replied that I had taken note of all points in his statement, but as to the proposed receptions in the villages, I asked his permission to take time to think it over, and promised to contact him later. Towards the end of the day I sounded him out, saying that as long as the pro-Khashm el Girba inhabitants came to the town to attend the reception, I could see no point in their going to the villages only to meet hostile people. He agreed, and fixed the time of their departure from Wadi Halfa on the day of the visit at 3 p.m.

The moment I put down the receiver, the news leaked out. Under the strain, the inhabitants grew tense and hostile. The situation was made more difficult by the extremist elements, who exploited the situation as far as possible. I could see that some underground activity was going on. Next day I published a programme of the visit, including a reception at the airport and a public reception in the town square at 9.30 a.m. The time of departure was fixed, as stipulated, at 3 p.m.

I had a long meeting with the police, at which we surveyed the situation thoroughly. We knew that the Nubians were a peaceful tribe who had no tendency to violence, but because of the severe provocations they were faced with, we could not count on their reaction. After weighing up all the possibilities in the light of our experience with them, we thought that their show of resistance would not go beyond the staging of a big demonstration, which could be controlled by our small police force.

No sooner had our meeting ended than we heard that the local committee had convened a meeting and decided to boycott the visit of the ministerial convoy. This news eased our security problem and gave us breathing space for a quiet reception. Nothing could have been more welcome to the police than seeing the possible agitators locking

themselves peaceably in their houses. However, to someone acquainted with the Nubian social code, the decision could be seen as a very effective expression of their contempt.

Amid the grim and frowning faces of the inhabitants, the supporters of Khashm el Girba were smiling and pleased. The sudden turn of events had refreshed their spirits and they heard the news of the visit with pleasure. They congregated their supporters from Degheim, Argin Ashkeit and Dibeira, and decided to put on a good show at the reception. The merchants' quarter, which was neutral, felt under no obligation to sympathise with the local committee and so refused to join the boycott. The non-Nubian elements in the town, whose support for the Degheim people was half-hearted, had leaned towards Khashm el Girba. On the whole, though the most of the population would remain in their houses in protest, there was quite a crowd for the reception.

On 20 October the Ministry of Information technicians arrived and started to install the local broadcasting station in a big tent in the town square, which was to be decorated for the reception. The hostile and unfriendly remarks of the passers-by gave them an idea of the sort of reception which they were preparing for the broadcasting station. One of them came to my office very worried, telling me of his apprehensions about the reaction of the inhabitants to the visit, thinking I was unaware of it. When I told him that I knew, he exclaimed: 'Then why don't you advise them not to come?' I suggested he should go and mind his own business.

On 21 October we tried to make the best of a bad situation by contacting the Khashm el Girba supporters and drawing up our plans for the reception. We could cope with their transport requirements from the villages to the airport and then to the town, and they were glad to receive the radio sets, which were rejected by the other villages. This done, we anxiously awaited the next day, touching wood whenever we thought of any incident which might upset the fragile *status quo*. In the afternoon Sayed El Awad Hamid Gabr el Dar, Governor, Northern Province, arrived from El Damer by train to meet the distinguished visitors to part of his province. I gave him a briefing, and he was dismayed at the state of affairs.

Then came the unforgettable day, 22 October. Early in the morning I accompanied Sayed El Awad to the airport and we were pleased to find quite a large crowd there. At 7 a.m. the plane arrived, with all the members of the mission on board. When they got down, they were cheered by the crowd. Dr. Mohamed Ahmed and Sayed Daud took me aside and asked if there had been any new developments. I briefed them, and then we all went by car to the Nile Hotel. On our way we



passed Degheim village, where the roads were noticeably empty; not a soul was to be seen anywhere. It was evident that their boycott had been strictly carried out. Then we arrived at the hotel. They had a quick breakfast and went to the town square, arriving on time. They found a good crowd waiting, and looked about them with satisfaction amid the slogans and cheers of welcome as they took their seats in the tent.

Sayed El Awad was the first man to speak into the microphone. He introduced the ministers to the gathering and then, in a speech interspersed with verses from the Koran, dwelt on the virtues of patience, endurance and resignation at moments of crisis. He said that the ministerial mission had come to meet the people and announce their new home, for which he gave his blessing and best wishes.

After him General Talaat Farid, the leader of the ministerial deputation, stepped up and in a short address, encouraged the people not to submit to their emotions and lament for their country which would soon be lost, but advised them rather to look forward to a bright future. He told them that his deputation had come from Khartoum to announce that the Government had selected Khashm el Girba as their new home, and said that the decision was taken for their own good. General Farid said that they would all be well compensated for the property they were losing and that freehold titles would be issued in the new home to all those who had freehold land in Wadi Halfa. Then he called on his colleague, General Bahhari, to state the circumstances which had led the Government to take the decision. When he finished the crowd applauded.

An important address from Bahhari followed, which was well-balanced and had a soothing effect. The minister spoke with admiration of the great sacrifice being made by Halfa people for the benefit of their mother-country. He expressed gratitude to the local committee for their great efforts in presenting the local point of view about the alternative sites. He also thanked the Commission for co-ordinating all the facts submitted in the reports of the local and international experts, which had helped the government to reach its final decision. He went on to say that after careful study of all those reports, their choice had to be confined to Wadi el Khawi, north or south of Khartoum and Khashm el Girba. To choose one of these, they had to consider the general requirements of the inhabitants, which obviously included the granting of freeholds for the land; the extent of cultivable area; the state of perennial irrigation; the possibility of constructing houses to a reasonable standard; industrial development; the establishment of social services of a standard at least equivalent to those existing in Wadi Halfa; availability of communications, and maintenance of public security.

He applied these criteria to each of the sites, then he concluded by saying that the Council of Ministers, who were deeply concerned about their future and that of the generations to come, had decided on Khashm el Girba as the best home for them. He defined its advantages over the other areas as follows: the fertility of its soil; it was not heavily populated; modern irrigation would be provided through a dam; the cultivable area was extensive; it was possible to provide a good standard of medical service; and all the villages could be joined up by road system and the area could have a railway link with the main Kassala-Khartoum line.

This address was greeted with loud applause from the gathering. All this time things went very smoothly and quietly. The boycotters kept strictly to their homes, listening to the addresses of the ministers. Then General Magbul el Amin, the Minister of Agriculture, began his address. He spoke at length about the extent of the cultivable area in Khashm el Girba, its soil fertility and the rotation of crops. While he was enumerating the different types of crops and fruit trees reckoned to be successful there, I noticed a crowd of about two hundred men marching in procession along the road in front of the council building, evidently approaching the town square. They carried a black banner and shouted in chorus '*Yasgot yasgot Khashm el Girba*' ('Down, down with Khashm el Girba'). I could see from their faces that they were from Argin village. The police rushed at them and they were dispersed before they could reach the square. They made several arrests and took the accused to the police post. This incident briefly diverted the attention of the crowd, but Magbul went on reading his address until it was finished. After him, Dr. Mohamed Ahmed Ali gave an elaborate survey of health conditions in Khashm el Girba. He assured the people that the danger of kala-azar as an epidemic no longer existed: the medical services, assisted by modern techniques, had controlled the infection and eradicated the possibility of any further outbreak. He added that his ministry had planned to carry out a very wide prophylactic and cure campaign against all communicable diseases throughout the affected area, before the emigration of the inhabitants to their new home. Finally he promised to provide adequate medical services in Khashm el Girba to combat disease and ensure a good state of health among the people. With this address the public meeting ended and the gathering dispersed peacefully.

The party then left for the Nile Hotel to take a short rest. At noon I went to the police post to check on the security situation. As I arrived I noticed about seventy arrested persons sitting in the shade in the yard, with two guards standing at the gate. I was surprised to see among them Suad Ibrahim Ahmed, a girl university graduate working in the

Department of Statistics who, so I was told, had been instigating people to join the demonstration from Argin. As I was checking on her case, a call came through for me from Khartoum. The caller introduced himself as General Mohamed Osman Nasr, whom I knew as a minister without portfolio, and a member of the Supreme Council for the Armed Forces. He told me that it had come to the knowledge of President Abboud that there were about seventy persons detained in custody by the police for taking part in a peaceful demonstration. I confirmed that this was true. He went on to say that in deference to the feelings of the inhabitants of Wadi Halfa towards the decision of the Government over their new home, and being aware of the general state of their morale, the President had given directions that the arrested persons should be released immediately, and further, that the police should not use force against the inhabitants, who should be allowed, as far as possible, to vent their anger in a peaceful way. He finally said that he had already contacted General Farid and General Bahhari in the Nile Hotel and conveyed those directions to them. I replied that the directions would be carried out, but my immediate reflection was that they were too full of the milk of human kindness. I contacted Bahhari by telephone and he confirmed receipt of these directions. I therefore released the seventy accused and noted that Suad, delighted at being released before the departure of the ministers, went straight to Degheim village, evidently intent on making more trouble.

The conversation with General Mohamed Osman Nasr was instantly released by the telephone operator, who had opened his ear as wide as a florin, taking in every word.

The news quickly circulated, with everybody adding a little to it from his own imagination, until it finally took the form that President Abboud had instructed the police not to use force, even if the inhabitants killed them to the last man.

At 1 p.m. the party moved to my house for lunch. During the meal I caught a glimpse of the police officer, Mohamed el Hidei, standing in my garden apparently wanting to see me. I slipped out to see him, and could see from his worried looks that he had serious tidings to relate. He told me there was a big assembly of about 3,000 men, massing on the main tarmac road near the mosque of Degheim village. Some of them were carrying heavy sticks and others were moving big stones and boulders from an open space near the village school and heaping them on to the road, to obstruct the traffic and block the route of the motorcade to the airport. Others were carrying hoes and chisels, and were trying to dig trenches across the road. Others, even more mischievous, had climbed up the telephone poles and cut the wires of the main line to Khartoum. He said he had gone to the scene and found

the crowd very hostile and unwilling to listen to him. He suggested that I should call on the military garrison to help the police restore law and order. I told him that as long as the Nubians had no arms or dangerous weapons of any kind, there was no need to call in the army, and that our police force, small as it was, could deal with the situation. I reminded him of the President's directions and instructed him to keep a vigilant eye on the situation. When he left me I stood alone for a few moments reflecting that the storm had gathered in strength and was rapidly approaching. I went straight to the telephone to check on the main line. I asked the exchange to connect me with the call-box of Degheim village and after some moments the operator replied that the line was dead.

All that time the official party were unaware of what was going on and were enjoying the last course of their meal. I took my seat at the dining table, which happened to be next to Magbul, and in a whisper gave him a brief account of the situation. Then the whisper went round, and after a few minutes, in which they had a hasty sip of coffee, the party left for the hotel. When we arrived there we convened a short meeting. Their immediate reaction was wise: to minimise the risk of the situation deteriorating further, and recognising the ugly mood of the gathering in Degheim, they decided to postpone their departure till next day, and gave me instructions that the police should not come into collision with the people. Accordingly we withdrew our police force from the outskirts of Degheim village and posted them around the hotel.

At 4 p.m. the gathering at Degheim, who were anxiously waiting for the motorcade to reach their trap, began to realise that the ministers had changed their mind about the time of departure, and so decided to rush the hotel. At 4.15 I observed them running towards us in a big mass. We collected our police force and put them in array, making a strong wall around the hotel enclosure. The demonstrators arrived in waves and started to build up to a large crowd in the open space between the Nile Hotel and the main tarmac road. Then they started to shout their slogans, '*Ayna wuudaka ya Abboud, Ayna dunuaka ya Abboud*' ('Where are your promises, Abboud? Where are your tears, Abboud?'). Within a short time, the crowd was joined by the villagers of Argin and Ashkeit, who happened to be in the town that day. The Dabarosa people also came and joined in the demonstration, making the already large crowd still larger. Then I saw Suad Ibrahim Ahmed leading a column of women in their traditional black dress from the direction of Degheim village. They took their line behind the demonstrators, and started to scoop up earth with their hands and throw it in the air, making thick clouds of dust and shouting at the top of their voices and

in their own dialect: '*Fadiru wala hagumunno Khashm el Girba la*' ('We prefer to die than go to Khashm el Girba'). The demonstration went on peacefully until political demagogues came forward to lead in shouting slogans. They shouted: '*Fagadta thighatna ya Abboud, ila el thakanat ya asakir*', which meant that they had lost confidence in Abboud, and that the place of military men was the barracks, and not the seat of government. With this change the demonstration had suddenly shifted its focus from the problem of Wadi Halfa to something else. The ministers, who were sitting in the garden of the hotel listening, became very displeased with this change in the situation. General Bahhari then went outside equipped with a hand loudspeaker, and for the first time he had a view of the big demonstration which his party had helped to bring about. When the gathering saw him, there was silence. He made a short speech, saying that they had been allowed to express their feelings and had been shouting their slogans for a long time. He and his colleagues had heard and understood them, and as there was no point in their staying any longer he advised them to go to their homes in peace. As soon as he went back to the hotel I saw that some elements started to throw stones at the police, who had stood in silence throughout. When El Hidei saw his men being stoned, he ordered them to use tear gas to disperse the crowd. At this moment, I called on some wise men from amid the crowd and cautioned them against provoking the police too much, which might cause our control over them to slip and so bring about serious developments. They agreed with me and within seconds they hurried back and disappeared into the crowd. Just before sunset I could see that the gathering had started to break up and retire. So the demonstration ended without casualty, except for three policemen, who suffered slight injuries from the stones thrown at them.

The striking fact of this demonstration was that, for the first time, the cry against emigration from Wadi Halfa was heard. It was also the first demonstration to have taken place during the military regime of President Abboud.

At 7 p.m., on his own initiative, Daud took Salhein and his own brother Mohamed to Degheim village in order to calm the inhabitants. They held a successful meeting with the people who seemed to have cooled down, after venting all their anger. The notables agreed that there was no need for any further trouble and promised to keep their people quiet and to allow the motorcade of guests to pass unhindered to the airport next day. After the success of Daud's peace mission, the police took a gang of Saidi prisoners, who had had no part in the affair, and made them clear away the stones from the road. No trenches had been dug, but there was slight damage to the asphalt surface. Likewise, the district postal engineer and telephone workers were able to repair

the main line to Khartoum. By 8 p.m. the situation was back to normal.

The party dined with Dr. Mohamed Ahmed Ali in his house at Dabarosa. A few individuals collected near the house and called slogans, until wise men came forward and rebuked them for their discourtesy to the guests of their quarter. They dispersed in shame.

Next morning, at Daud's suggestion, we had arranged a Nile trip for the party on board the *Zahra*. Daud's intention was to give the party some idea of the villages and date trees of the existing Nubian settlement. I took this opportunity to invite some notables to accompany them on the trip for a discussion. They sailed downstream, half way to Faras. When they passed by Argin, the sight of the thick forest of date trees, lining the bank of the Nile, screening the village from view, and casting its full reflection on the smooth surface of the water, was magnificent. At Dibeira a group of women stood on the river bank throwing dust in the direction of the steamer, to express their displeasure. During the trip the party had a logical and constructive argument with the notables at the breakfast table. We returned to Halfa at 10 a.m. to find the motorcade ready to set off for the airport. When we disembarked, the police officer, who seemed in good spirits, told me that all was quiet. The party lost no time and within a few minutes the cars were on their way. When we passed by Degheim we realised that the people had kept their word. Except for Suad Ibrahim Ahmed, who shouted a slogan against General Farid, and an old man standing alone, who shook his stick in the air and shouted 'Long live the Halfa people!', the road was almost deserted. Within a quarter of an hour the party was on board the plane, bound for Khartoum.

On 25 October, men and women of the Nubian community in Khartoum collected on Palace Avenue and staged a demonstration in sympathy with their fellow Nubians. The demonstration was led by Sayed Mohamed Tawfig, the Commissioner of Labour, and marched along the road towards the Palace, shouting 'Halfa, Halfa, long live Halfa!' When they reached the cross-roads with Gamhuria Avenue, university students, who had come in a big procession from their hostels, joined up with them, led the chanting of the slogans and changed the whole demonstration to a show of political opposition. The police were not merciful this time. They used their batons and tear gas and arrested several people, including Mohamed Tawfig, who, after questioning, was relieved of his position in government service. His retirement caused indignation in Wadi Halfa, and was taken as an act of revenge for their demonstrations.

Now that the Government had taken a final decision in favour of Khashm el Girba, I should like to make my own comments on that important and controversial decision.

Many people blamed the Government for making a gesture of consulting the Nubians over the choice of their new home. Tom Little, in his *High Dam at Aswan*, condemned it as a mistake, and praised the Egyptians for their authoritative attitude in selecting Kom Ombo for the Egyptian Nubians, without any regard for their wishes. My personal opinion was quite different. After all the Nubians were faced with a catastrophe, created by the two governments, and through no fault on their part, their normal pattern of life was being disturbed and they were being made to lose their homes, their valuable possessions and their land — all this, apart from the sentimental ties that bound them to their homeland. Though the High Dam might be praised as one of the greatest achievements of mankind, to the Nubians the whole affair was a curse. To ignore all these passions in tackling such a critical question as the removal of their ancestral home was to reduce them to the level of animals. I cannot assess how Tom Little would feel if faced with a similar situation in his own country and compelled by his government to go and live in a place he did not like. For this reason I believe that the government's gesture was noble and humane.

The other delicate question often asked was why the government did not bind itself to the result of the vote, if it was genuinely keen to respect the local point of view. To answer this question I have first to discuss the circumstances which brought about the result, and then comment on the result itself. Had I been a Nubian I would have confined my choice to two sites only — Wadi el Khawi or Khashm el Girba. As to the former, I had already spoken of the unique advantages which distinguished this area from the others. They were thought mainly to consist in the similarity of the environmental and climatic conditions to those of Wadi Halfa. In that area they would not undergo any social or economic changes and could pursue their old pattern of life. They could build their houses to the same design and decorate their gates with china saucers, as in Wadi Halfa. They would have better opportunities to grow date trees and a wide area for the rotation of their crops. Moreover, they would not be disturbed by the rains, with thunder and storms, to which they were not accustomed and which they feared. The expected rise in the cost of irrigation could be compensated for by their enjoyment of these advantages. The technical difficulties of irrigation and transport could be left for the government to worry about, as long as the choice was open to them. These were the unique characteristics which ought to have made Wadi el Khawi an attractive choice, if not the obvious one, for the Nubians.

Once they looked beyond Wadi el Khawi to the south, any argument about the climatic and environmental conditions became irrelevant. All the other five sites were in the rain belt, with nearly the same margin of



rainfall. The environmental and social conditions did not differ much. The Shukria Arabs, the Hassania, the Hussunat, the Kawahla, the Batahin and the Jamuiya differed little from themselves. The conditions of health among them were also like their own and, as Dr. Mohamed Ahmed Ali had said, the modern techniques of medicine had conquered and kept under control the danger of epidemics. Though kala-azar might appear sporadically at Khashm el Girba, the other four sites were subject to sporadic outbreaks of cerebro-spinal meningitis. Therefore the determining factors left for comparison were limited to the magnitude of the cultivable area, the fertility of the soil, the cost of irrigation, the possibility of industrial development and the state of communications. All these factors, if applied objectively, would have made Khashm el Girba the better choice.

It was true that the inhabitants were consulted, their local committee had functioned and a result had been arrived at. But throughout this process there were gaps and shortcomings, which tended to weaken the result. In this nobody other than the local committee was to blame. I have already criticised the way the committee was set up and shown how it deprived certain points of view of representation in proportion to their supporters. I also commented on the attitude of the well-to-do class and their role in attempting to influence a decision in favour of the Kadaru area. From the inception of the committee, the majority of members, and the central office in particular, belonged to this class. After the visit of Sayed Daud, they took certain steps in order to establish their influence and so serve their own ends. Many instances could be quoted. The names which the committee submitted for its deputation were carefully selected from their own class. The proclamation issued by their 'study committee' contained false information about land fertility in the Kadaru area, with the intention of misleading the simple Nubians who were ignorant of the prevailing conditions in the Sudan, and inducing them to support their choice. Moreover they exaggerated the danger of kala-azar and described it as endemic to Khashm el Girba, a site which they had seen to be empty of any human settlement. Unfortunately, they had forgotten that the biggest problem of Wadi Halfa lay in its acute land shortage, which had led to the mass emigration of its youth in search of a living elsewhere. Had they been fair and objective, they would have given priority to the essential requirements of the poor inhabitants, whose main ambition in life was to find good and extensive land to utilise so as to raise their standard of living. With these obvious objectives in view, the committee might easily have united the ambitions of the inhabitants and led them towards the common good. Regrettably, the committee gave no heed to these basic needs but



maintained their short-sighted outlook, which subjected the whole area to opposed currents of opinion and poisoned the atmosphere with prejudiced propaganda. It was little wonder, therefore, that these elements should have combined together to bring about such an abortive result. The vote count showed clearly that the committee had failed to rise to the occasion. All the camps had failed. Not one of them could claim to represent the wishes of the majority, or even half the voters. For this reason, the Government had no alternative to taking the matter in hand and giving the final decision. Yet despite this, it should not be assumed that the attempt was not worth making. With all the unfavourable reactions of the inhabitants, their dissatisfaction and angry demonstrations, the government had fulfilled its human duty. In spite of their quarrel with the Government, our Nubians were boasting that they had been treated in a more humane and more dignified way than their relatives across the Egyptian border.

To return to the sequence of events in Wadi Halfa. After the ministerial convoy had returned to Khartoum, the morale of the inhabitants continued to deteriorate. I realised that it would take quite a time for them to assimilate the facts and recover from their shock. The situation was aggravated by a heinous decision taken by the committee, calling on all inhabitants to boycott the enumeration of date trees and the Sharia court activities. I met the committee members and tried hard to convince them that these activities had nothing to do with Khashm el Girba, and that they were only intended to register and preserve their rights over their immovable property which would soon be lost in the flood, irrespective of which direction they might choose to go. To boycott such a service through mere obstinacy was little short of suicidal. But nobody listened to me and I achieved nothing. I then toured the villages, advocating the co-operation of the inhabitants to protect their interests in compensation, but they too refused to comply. The Khashm el Girba supporters, on the other hand, had approached me and expressed their desire to answer my call but I did not like to expose them to more intimidation or involve the enumerators and Sharia staff in local differences. I decided to watch out for a favourable moment for solving the problem as a whole. So we had to stop our work and wait.

In December 1960, I was notified of the Government's decision to retire Sayed Daud, the chairman of the Commission, on a pension. I was astonished by this sudden turn of events, for which I could find no direct reason. Some people had speculated that Daud stirred up the troubles at Wadi Halfa on 22 October and had allowed his wife to take part in the demonstration at Khartoum. I personally felt that it was unlike Daud, who was occupying a key post, to conspire against his

own employers. Having been in charge of Wadi Halfa and observed the situation closely during the days of trouble, I could find no trace of any influence of Daud on the reactions of the inhabitants towards the Khashm el Girba decision, and at the same time I could tell that the vote had displeased him. As for his wife's joining the demonstration in Khartoum, I did not feel that Daud should be made to answer for it. Like all Nubian women she had shown her feelings on an important issue which affected her mother-village and her own relatives. Indeed all the Degheim people who led the demonstrations were relatives of Daud and one could hardly expect that the mere fact of their kinship with him would oblige them to stand aloof and feel indifferent. Moreover, I had observed that Daud had been in the company of the ministerial deputation constantly throughout their visit, the only time he left them being for his successful mission of peace to Degheim. Later I was to understand that the Government was angered over his contact with the American Embassy and invitation to Mr. Scaff without their permission. But even this was hardly a satisfactory explanation; the Government certainly knew of Mr. Scaff's mission before the ministers' visit to Wadi Halfa, and I knew of no foreign or international expert who submitted a report to the Commission, as mentioned by General Bahhari in his address, other than Mr. Scaff. To explain Daud's dismissal retrospectively in this way seemed dubious and I believe that the decision to retire him was unworthy and unjustified. We lost in Daud a very able man, with whom we had worked fruitfully. With him we had made a successful start and had covered a good distance along the road to emigration. His place was temporarily filled by Sayed Hassan Ali Abdalla, the under-secretary of the Ministry of the Interior, a man of experience, wisdom and ability. Though he had not been directly concerned with the problem of Wadi Hadi Halfa, he was well acquainted with our security situation, as I hinted above.

On Daud's retirement a feverish campaign of mischievous and evil rumours was launched against Khashm el Girba. Besides conjuring up a savage picture of the Hadandawa and Zebeidia tribes, they said that the water of the river Atbara was polluted with virulent organisms and was as yellow as horses' urine, and that the rains there were torrential; and they spoke of thunderbolts that would make the atomic bomb of Hiroshima appear mild. Moreover, they said that in Khashm el Girba there was a strange disease that would impregnate men, and there were apes that would rape women. The Government, they said, knowing these facts, had decided to use force: all the inhabitants would be taken to the trains at gun-point. One day two men from Dibeira came to my office to check the credibility of these fabulous rumours, and I told them that I was ready to send them to Khashm el Girba to see with

their own eyes whether there were human beings there or baboons, and whether on their return they felt normal or pregnant. They laughed and left me.

Encouraged by the tolerant attitude of the Government towards their subversive activities, the local committee sent two rude letters to the President, demanding that he revoke the choice of Khashm el Girba. They received no reply, and in March sent a third, complaining discourteously at his neglect of the two previous letters. On 23 March a reply came to me saying that the committee was dissolved. I immediately sent them letters to this effect. Thus the local committee came to an end.

As soon as the local committee was dissolved, the situation changed greatly. The mass of the inhabitants felt liberated from the yoke of pressure and intimidation imposed on them by the committee, and became more co-operative towards the local authorities. The notables of the different localities contacted me and requested the resumption of the enumeration and Sharia court activities in the villages. Within a few days this was done. The improvement in the situation gave me a good opportunity to counter a persistent rumour. In a report to Khartoum I suggested that the Government should state publicly that the emigration to Khashm el Girba would not be compulsory in any way, and that anyone not wishing to go there could make his own arrangements to settle anywhere he liked in the Sudan. This suggestion was agreed to, and the announcement had the desired effect.

## BUILDING THE RESETTLEMENT AREA: FIRST STEPS

Immediately after the return of the ministerial deputation to Khartoum, the Government decided to hurry the construction of the dam at Khashm el Girba and the planning of the scheme. It was decided to build the dam downstream at the narrow gorge through which flowed the River Atbara, some forty miles north of its confluence with the Setit River. Both rivers descended from the mountains of Ethiopia and both had floods like the Blue Nile. The river bed was about 45 metres below the surrounding area and the suggested level of the reservoir at maximum storage was 473 metres above sea level, which was 2 metres below surrounding ground level. It was reckoned that its capacity would be slightly over one milliard cubic metres and would extend back upstream as far as the confluence of the two rivers. This dam would 'command' (i.e. be able to irrigate by gravity) an area of half a million *feddans* of fertile soil stretching along the Khashm el Girba plain. This scheme was initiated by Sayed Mirghani Hamza, who was Minister of Irrigation in 1956. When President Abboud's regime came to power, the Government decided to put it into practice, and financial provisions for it had already been approved in the ten-year plan. The decision to resettle the Wadi Halfa inhabitants there had made it imperative for the Government to give it top priority. A contract was therefore signed with Sogria, a French engineering firm, to design the dam and act as consultant engineers to the Ministry of Irrigation during the construction. The deadline for completion of the dam was fixed at July 1963. In January 1960 a geological survey was carried out at the site, and the result was satisfactory.

During the year Sogria prepared an elegant design for the dam and completed the construction plans. The design envisaged a concrete structure, 350 metres long and 55 metres high from river bed to parapet, with seven sluice gates, blocking the main course of the river. The dam was to be equipped with three electric turbines attached to the sluice gates with an output of 7,000 kw. of electrical energy and another three

with the same capacity built at the head of the main canal. The main structure of the dam was joined to the surrounding plain by two earth embankments, stretching out like wings to a distance of 1 km. on the west side and 2 km. on the east side, and lined with a skin wall of stone on the side facing the reservoir.

Meanwhile, an advertisement was published in the world's press, inviting international tenders for the construction of the dam. Thirteen tenders were received and after careful study by the Ministry of Irrigation and the consultants, the final choice of Dott. Ing. G. Torno and Co., an Italian engineering firm, was announced on 26 November 1960. The agreed price was £S 7.456 million. Within three months all the construction machinery was on site. The Italians planted cables, built a control tower, a concrete mixer, and an ice factory to supply the mixer with ice blocks instead of water. Their bulldozers, stone-crushers and sieves were all busy, piling up heaps of gravel of all grades. To provide accommodation for staff and workers, they built a small colony of good standard near the dam site, equipped with a cinema. And to provide for religious needs, as well as entertainment, the Catholic Italians erected a mosque with a minaret in the middle of the workers'



8. The Khashm el Girba Dam completed

settlement. By February 1960 the coffer dam was completed and the foundation piles had been driven. The construction work had already begun.

Seventy-nine tenders were received from different firms for the excavation of the 15-mile-long main canal. Philipp Holzmann of Frankfurt, with their good record in the Managil extension, won the contract, for slightly over £1 million. They brought their excavators, bulldozers and carriages to the site, built their workshop and fuel depots, and began to move the 9 million cubic metres of earth along the course of the canal. At the same time a contract was signed with the Société Parisienne de l'Industrie Electrique for the construction of the transmission line from the dam generators to the proposed site of New Halfa town, some 50 km. away.

Along with these engineering activities, the Ministry of Agriculture had taken steps to initiate an experimental farm near the scheme, and on the edge of the 125,000 *feddans* assigned for the resettlement of Wadi Halfa's inhabitants. They set up a pump near the dam site and dug a small-bore canal to carry water 15 miles to the farm. The farm itself covered 100 *feddans*, divided into three sections. The first plot was allotted to horticultural experiments, involving the planting of various types of fruit and date trees. The second division was cultivated with the winter rotations, such as wheat and barley, and different types of sugar cane; the third was left for winter vegetables like onions, peas, beans, beet, potatoes and salad plants. Beside this the forest department made an extensive experiment for planting shade and timber trees.

While the Nubians of Wadi Halfa were lamenting the loss of their country, the Shukria at the Khashm el Girba end were regarding the expropriation of their land for the proposed scheme with displeasure. Their local poets began composing verses expressing their sorrow and dismay. One of them, El Sadig Hamad, wrote:

*Hajaleej El Hassan rahan khalas wi ingazzan  
Tura' al girba mahin fi el ideihim khazzen  
Abkan ya al aranib lil ibeitir wa 'azzan  
Deek nas Halfa fog ras el Meigil 'azzan*

— meaning that the trees of Sheikh El Hassan in Khashm el Girba fell and disappeared for ever, and that the water for the Khashm el Girba canals had already been stored in the grey dam. The hares of the Butana should weep for his tailless hound as the cock of the Halfa people would soon be crowing on top of El Meigil hill.\*

\* When the place was still a wilderness before the resettlement scheme was initiated, it was full of hares which the Shukria used to hunt with their hounds. Soon it would be occupied by the Halfa people and their chickens, thus making it an unsuitable habitat for hares.

The Shukria, seeing so much activity on their land, did not keep silent. They petitioned the Government for compensation for their acquired rights of pasture and cultivation on the scheme area. Accordingly a land settlement commission was appointed and an agreement was reached that monetary compensation at the rate of £S 1 per *feddan* should be paid to the Shukria Arabs for their acquired right of cultivation on 78,000 *feddans*; that the privilege of tenancy grants, apart from the area set aside to Wadi Halfa, should be confined to the Shukria and other local tribes who used to graze their camels in the area; and that in order to compensate for the loss of the right of way for the camel herds across the scheme to the river Atbara, a canal should be dug to the outskirts of the cultivable area, to provide drinking water for the camels.

After this, the Shukria cashed their money and waited to receive their tenancies in the later stages of the scheme, following the resettlement of Wadi Halfa.

In Khartoum the Commission membership was extended to include representatives from the Ministries of Health and Education; to make the executive side more effective, a branch office for resettlement was established at Khashm el Girba, with Sayed Uthman Hussein, a



9. Deputation from Nubia visiting the experimental farm at Khashm el Girba

colleague of mine, as commissioner. My office was given additional staff to cope with all the urgent problems of the situation. My title was changed from District Commissioner to Commissioner for Emigration.

By the first week of April I had selected a number of men from all the villages of Wadi Halfa and sent them in a party to visit the experimental farm of Khashm el Girba. The selection was made on as wide a basis as possible, representing supporters, the half-hearted and the opponents. They went by train to Khartoum and from there took a bus across the Butana plain to their destination. On their arrival at Khashm el Girba village, the party noticed that the village market was surrounded by armed police and that an officer with three policemen was standing in front of one of the shops, with a pile of goods lying on the ground. On inquiry they were told that the police were making a general search for goods smuggled from Ethiopia. This information aroused the curiosity of the representative of Faras West, whose village was on the boundary between the Sudan and Egypt, and whose fellow-villagers were notorious for their smuggling. He got down from the bus and made a lengthy inquiry from two men who were standing by as to the nature and the extent of smuggling in that area, the type of goods involved and by what means and through what roads they were smuggled. He was so absorbed in his inquiry that he nearly forgot his fellow-passengers, who, knowing his incentive, were following the conversation with a sinister smile. He resumed his seat with an air of satisfaction.

After a short visit to the dam site, the party proceeded to the experimental farm, and on arrival found the inspector of agriculture waiting for them. He conducted them through the various sections explaining to them the history of the farm, the stages of growth and the results produced by the different types of species planted. They were impressed by all they heard and saw. Fruit- and date-tree shoots were healthy and growing well and the sugar cane was tall and flourishing. They were particularly attracted by the good crop of wheat and the large size of its grain. In the vegetable garden the party were amazed at the excellent results produced by all the types of vegetables grown, without exception. All the party showed keen interest in their thorough inspection of the vegetable beds except the man of Faras, who seemed to have found what he was looking for in the village market. When they had finished, the inspector did not forget to present them with samples of all the products, and these they were happy to take back home.

Back in Wadi Halfa, they scattered to their villages with their parcels of samples and set up small exhibitions in their houses to which they invited anyone interested. One of the opponents of Khashm el Girba was telling me that he had brought with him samples of onions as big as



babies' heads. 'Two of them will fill a whole *ruba*,' he said. The Faras man had no doubt added to his exhibition some useful information about the state of smuggling in Khashm el Girba.

This visit had far-reaching effects in diminishing the inhabitants' doubts about Khashm el Girba. It gave them a living example of the high rate of productivity of the soil, and strengthened their faith in the Government's intentions. The Ministry of Information, at our request, produced a good colour film on the experimental farm, which was shown to the public in Wadi Halfa cinema. I used to attend it daily to observe the favourable reactions of the spectators. By that time the drive towards Khashm el Girba was quite clear to me, and I could predict that the emigration would be successful.

Towards the end of April, Sayed Hassan Ali Abdalla paid his first visit to Wadi Halfa, as chairman of the Commission. He made a tour of many villages, where he was cordially received by the inhabitants. He discussed with them the preliminary planning prepared for their villages and the town of New Halfa. The planning, he said, would be on modern lines, and every village would be equipped with public and social services. The houses would be built of cement blocks and roofed with permanent material in order to cut down maintenance costs. The plan of the town would be exceptionally good, to make it a worthy capital of the great scheme that was being developed. All the villages, he said, would be located at a distance of 5 km. from each other, spreading throughout the length and breadth of the area assigned for their resettlement, with New Halfa town in the middle, so that the farthest village would not be more than 20 km. from the main town. This in itself was a great advantage compared with the 35 km. from Faras in the north, or the 100 km. from Akasha in the extreme south, to the existing town of Wadi Halfa. To complete his tour he paid random visits to various Nubian houses to acquaint himself with their existing accommodation in order so that their essential requirements would be incorporated in the design of their future dwellings.

On his return to Khartoum, an advertisement was published calling for international tenders for the planning of all the villages and of New Halfa town; for the preparation of designs and plans for the dwelling-houses and public service buildings; for consultants to the commission for the execution of the resettlement scheme, to supervise the construction works of the contractors; and for preparation of the construction plans and other documents needed for international tenders.

In July 1961, a contract was signed with Messrs. Kocks, a German engineering firm, to undertake the job. By the first week of August two engineers had arrived in Wadi Halfa with sketch plans showing the

general principles they intended to follow in the design of houses, such as the ventilation facilities, the building materials and the type of roofing, and drawings showing the layout of the two types of house proposed for the tenants.

I invited some enlightened Nubians to join our discussion. It was agreed that the site plan for all houses should stretch from east to west with all doors and windows facing north-south to allow for adequate ventilation. To safeguard against the infiltration of outer heat through the walls, Kocks' engineers had suggested that the walls should be built of hollow concrete blocks or of a cement concrete layer with loose gravel sandwiched in as insulator, to which they gave the name of 'robconco', and that the roofing should be made of asbestos sheets. This met with general approval. Then the house plans were discussed. The small house consisted of two living rooms 4 x 4 m., a kitchen and a store room of 4 x 3 m. each, and a verandah of 6 x 3 m. The big house had an extra guest room. Both types were equipped with w.c.s, and the entire yard area of 500 to 600 square metres was surrounded by a wall of concrete slabs. At first the Nubians argued that two living rooms were not sufficient for the average house, but because of the high cost of construction they dropped this objection.

In September I received a big album containing the plans of the villages and New Halfa town. The plans of houses and public buildings were also set out in detail. All the villages were laid out on a square plan, with parallel roads that crossed forming rectangular blocks, each consisting of two rows of four houses set back to back. In the centre was a market square surrounding the village mosque. The whole layout was so even that it seemed like a chess-board. The main entrance led to the public services. A visitor to the village would first meet the dispensary, then the police post, then the school, until he came to the market square with the mosque. All village boundaries enclosed wide vacant areas for future extension, with cemeteries at the corners.

The town plan was rather more elegant. Its main feature was also a square, with four straight roads along the outer edges and divided by two crossing roads into four quarters. The open centre was in the form of a perfect circle. Around this open space, and between the main roads at each 90-degree angle, were the market place and the public administration buildings, such as the civil and Sharia courts. On the outer edge of the square to the north were the hospital, water works, and irrigation and agriculture offices. To the south a large area was reserved for industry, and to the east was the railway station. The schools and officials' houses were scattered through the residential quarters and a large vacant area was reserved at the northern sector, for future extension.

All the public buildings had fine elevations, and the two-storeyed hospital surpassed any in the Sudan in appearance and accommodation, except that of Khartoum. The only strange design was that of the mosques: it was derived from cathedrals and parish churches, with the minarets designed as broad rectangular blocks like bell-towers. More strange still was the design of the main structure of the mosque. This was shown standing on short walls with the roof sloping from the middle towards the sides, and with protruding hooks at the corners, like Japanese temples. It was evident that Kocks' engineers had no idea about Islamic architecture or the use of mosques. When I met one of them in Khartoum and queried the design, he replied, 'Oh, it is meant to serve as a social centre, for worship and cinema shows.' He only forgot to add a theatre to his design to complete its social services. This design was later cancelled, and the traditional mosque design was adopted.

I made a special tour of all the villages, showing the inhabitants these exciting drawings, which demonstrated the main features of their new home. They looked on with interest as I turned over the pages of the album. They were keen to know all the details and asked many questions. The design of the mosque of course attracted many jokes, but the rest of the drawings seemed to satisfy them.

On 28 August another advertisement was published, calling for international tenders for the building of the largest settlement scheme ever developed in the history of the Sudan. The scheme involved the building of twenty-three villages and the town of New Halfa. There were to be 7,190 tenants' houses, 783 bungalows for government officials, thirty schools, ten boarding houses for students, twenty-seven mosques and 100 public buildings, including administrative offices, a big hospital, twenty dispensaries, a waterworks in the town, eleven electric transformers, an airstrip and an all-weather road running beside the west canal to the end of the resettlement area. All houses and public buildings in the town had to be supplied with electricity. The deadline for receipt of tenders was fixed at 31 March 1962.

A quiet period now followed in Wadi Halfa during which we were able to complete the enumeration of all date trees in the area. We could check the lists and pass them to the Commissioner for Compensation, Sayed Ahmed el Tahir. Farah Shorbagi had finished with the land settlement at Saras and Dāwashat *omodias* and we were able to draw up our land register in its final form for the Sharia courts to settle the land disputes for compensation purposes.

On 9 November the anti-Khashm el Girba elements, particularly in Degheim village, hoisted black banners on the gates of their houses, to commemorate the signing of the Nile agreement. The scene was very

striking, especially to the railway passengers who passed through Degheim village on their way to Halfa station or Khartoum. As it was a peaceful show of feeling, the police did not interfere and the flags flew for days, until they were torn off by the wind.

On 17 November a big celebration was held to mark the third anniversary of the military revolution. A big crowd of villagers and townspeople gathered in the town centre early in the morning. The anti-Khashm el Girba elements including the bus-drivers of Degheim boycotted the celebration, thus causing inconvenience to the scheme's supporters, who had to come to the town on foot. I gave a long address, giving all details about the planning approved for the new home at Khashm el Girba and the public services allocated for the villages and New Halfa town. I also reported on the rate of progress achieved so far in the construction of public works and the steps taken by the Government over the building of the new town and villages. Gymnastic shows by the sports club and various other entertainments followed. The gathering dispersed peacefully at 11 a.m.

The rest of the year passed uneventfully.

## COMPENSATION: THE PROBLEM TACKLED

In January 1962 I attended a series of meetings of a special committee, set up to assess compensation for date and fruit trees.\*

Sayed Hassan Ali Abdalla, chairman of the Commission, presided over this committee. Before those meetings, I had collected relevant figures from the court register at Wadi Halfa, showing prices at which date trees had been sold in the district over the past fifteen years. Similar information was gathered from the Merowe and Dongola areas for the same period. Rates of compensation previously paid by the Egyptian Government to the inhabitants of Faras island for the date trees affected by the second heightening of the Aswan dam in 1932, and rates paid by the Sudan Government for the Dakhla date trees in the Atbara region,\* were also collected. Moreover, the Department of Horticulture had sent experts to the affected area in the harvest season in October 1961 to make sample estimates of production rates of random trees, which they had selected in various *sagiyas* in all *omodias*. Their sampling covered all types as well as all bearing ages of date trees. Market prices of the different types of date fruits were also listed for the last fifteen years. Furthermore, the Ministry of Agriculture economist, Sayed Yousif Hassan Saied, had dug out from his library all the theories laid down by previous agricultural economists for the assessment of such compensation, from which he derived his own formula. This was explained in a sizeable pamphlet, full of tables and algebraic equations, to guide the committee.

\* Composed of Sayed Abd el Rahim Mirghani, under-secretary, Ministry of Finance, Sayed Yousif Hassan Saied, economist, Ministry of Agriculture, Sayed Abd el Rahim el Amin, senior inspector, Ministry of Agriculture, Sayed Ahmed el Tahir, Commissioner for Compensation, Sayed Abd el Rahim Idris, legal adviser of the Commission, and myself, as Commissioner for Emigration.

† Dakhla had been agricultural land but became residential — all landowners were compensated for their land and trees.

While all these mathematical preparations were going on, the Nubians were inventing their own theories and their own algebra to calculate their compensation. In a note submitted to me they demanded £S 100 per tree, calculated on the value of the crop produced by the tree throughout its life cycle. In a discussion with them I pointed out that the price level of the market governed the value of commodities. If, for instance, they took a heifer to market, they wouldn't expect to add the calculated value of its offspring to its price. The price of a hen would not include the value of the eggs it would lay for the rest of its life. This was due to the fact that a date tree would not produce all its life's fruit in one season, any more than a chicken would lay all its eggs at one sitting. The distribution of production over a long period and the cost of breeding and marketing had to be considered. They finally accepted my argument and only requested that the rates should be fair and equitable.

The committee held five successive meetings, in which they studied all the figures. I also gave them local background information about the classification of different age-groups of bearing trees, according to their rate of productivity, and some hints of customary law governing co-partnership in growing date trees, as was the practice in many parts of the area.

The following categories show the proportions of the different productivity rates in relation to bearing trees: half the bearing trees had to be considered as very young with scanty production (this ratio was in conformity with the normal rates of increase in the number of date trees over the years); one-third were in their prime, with the optimum rate of production; one-sixth were the very old and useless females.

In Wadi Halfa it often happened that three persons would agree to grow a garden of date trees as co-partners. In this case one of the three had to provide the shoots, another the land and the third the means of irrigation. When the trees grew up and bore fruit, the benefit was divided in equal shares between them. At times this arrangement only covered individual trees scattered in a field, in which case the landowner had the right to utilise the land in rotational or other crops. These cases, which were numerous in Wadi Halfa, show that the landowner should not necessarily be considered the sole owner of date trees.

From the beginning we had noticed that the formula of Sayed Yousif was based on units of one acre, and that the land value was included in the rate of compensation arrived at. As most date trees were not grown in proper gardens, and as the calculation of the land value in tree compensation would incur difficulties in the cases of co-partnerships and would not be intelligible to the simple farmer, we could by simple calculation deduct the value of the land and reduce the formula

to suit a single tree. The committee then went into tiresome calculations, applying average rates of production and average prices to the equations for every type of tree. Amazingly, the results nearly matched current market prices. Two other estimates were made separately by Sayed Abd el Rahim Mirghani, based on the crop value of 1959 (the last year in which conditions were normal in Wadi Halfa), and by Sayed Abd el Hamid el Atabani, based on the current price of date trees and the rates of compensation paid for Dakhla date palms in the Atbara area. The three estimates went hand in hand for all types, except for some variation with the Barakawi, where the difference between the highest and lowest estimates for a tree was £S 3. The committee then decided to take the average of the three estimates, rounding up the figures to the nearest pound. The result was as follows:

1. <i>Date trees</i>	£S
(a) Gondeila, per tree	10
(b) Barakawi, per tree	10
(c) Bartamouda, per tree	8
(d) Gaw, per tree	5
(e) Males, per tree	1
(f) Shoots under bearing	1
(g) Small shoots in pits	0.500
(h) Baby shoots	0.150
2. <i>Fruit trees</i>	
(a) Mangos, per tree	8
(b) Guavas, per tree	2.5
(c) Grape, per vine	0.4
(d) Bananas, per tree	1
(e) Oranges, per tree	3
(f) Grapefruit, per tree	3.750
(g) Tangerines, per tree	2
(h) Lemons, per tree	2.5

All non-bearing fruit trees were left for assessment to be made later by the Commissioner for Compensation. These estimates were submitted to the Commission for further consideration.

In February 1962 another committee was appointed to consider the basis and estimates for land compensation.\*

\* Composed of Sayed Kailani Abd el Gadir, Commissioner of Lands, Sayed Abd el Rahim el Amin, Sayed Yousif Hassan Saied, Sayed Abd el Rahim Idris, Sayed Ahmed el Tahir, Sayed Abdalla el Ariefi, Deputy Commissioner for Compensation, Sayed Abdin Mohamed Abdalla, Registrar of Lands, Sayed Taha Uthman, assistant deputy chairman of the Commission and myself.

The committee classified the lands of Wadi Halfa into three categories – agricultural, residential and commercial. Each class was studied and assessed separately.

*Agricultural land* was divided into two main classes: 1. *sagiya* or *ulwi* (higher land), which comprised the belt stretching along the banks of the river, normally cultivated by lift irrigation and 2. *juruf* or *salluka* which included all the sloping land of the river banks and low islands, which were inundated at the Nile flood, and re-emerged at low river, well coated with layers of silt and soaked with water for a complete rotation.

The *sagiya* or strip was composed almost entirely of layer upon layer of fine sand and silt, with the water table only some 10-15 feet below the soil surface – with a very light texture which made it easy to work. It was ideal for date trees, rotational crops and citrus fruits. Its high rate of fertility, combined with the favourable climatic conditions, had made its level of productivity one of the highest in the Sudan. Unfortunately its narrowness had brought about an acute shortage of land which had discouraged sales and purchases; the register of Wadi Halfa showed that land ownership had remained stagnant for decades. These factors would be reflected in the high price a *feddan* would fetch if it were put up for sale. Actually it was priceless.

The only precedent the committee could find was in the rate of compensation paid by the Sudan Railway for the acquisition of a narrow strip of agricultural land passing through the fields between Halfa town and Faras on which they built their railway line in 1935. The rate paid was £S 150 per *feddan*.

The note submitted by the senior inspector of agriculture, Northern Province, had quoted high figures for the soil productivity rate in Wadi Halfa. These figures offered a good basis for calculating the land value, and when Sayed Yousif and Sayed Abd el Rahim el Amin applied them to the land valuation formula, the estimate came to £S 170. The committee members, aware that Halfa people were insisting on being compensated land for land at the rate of two *feddans* for one, and because the price of agricultural land in other parts of the Sudan was much cheaper, agreed that the estimate was reasonable.

*Juruf* or *salluka* land is considered the most fertile soil of all, as it used to receive an annual coating of layers of fertile silt and, being well soaked with flood water, needed no further irrigation, thus cutting down the overhead costs of cultivation to the minimum. All *juruf* land in the Sudan was much more expensive than *sagiya* land. The figures collected had shown that the price was often three times higher in some river districts. For this reason the committee agreed on £S 250 as an arbitrary figure per household *feddan*.

For government agricultural land rented on lease for long periods,



the compensation would be calculated on the basis of annual rental value for the outstanding period of the lease, plus compensation for the canals, buildings and irrigation installations. Land leased on year to year tenancies should be paid for in the form of a grant, in addition to compensation for the canals and means of lift irrigation.

As for *residential land*, there were at first very few people who would be affected by the estimates of the committee. The great majority of the inhabitants were going to Khashm el Girba, and they would be compensated house for house. The very few who would be affected were those who either owned more than one house or wanted to emigrate elsewhere. In the rural area the status of land property was very odd. Most residential plots were neither leasehold nor freehold. This was due to nearly all villages having been damaged by the high Nile flood of 1946, when the inhabitants took refuge by building their new villages on high ground farther from the river banks and included the old residential sites in the agricultural land. The time span since 1946 was too short to allow the application of the traditional law of 'laying of hand', which might have entitled them to the freehold.

In the town it was discovered that there had been scarcely any sale or purchase of freehold residential land over the previous fifteen years. The figures collected for the rental values of various houses in Wadi Halfa, together with the tax assessed on them, were of no help in assessing the land value, as in most cases they threw light on the standard of building, rather than on the area class of the plot or the conditions of its lease. In the circumstances, the committee had no alternative but to rely on an informed guess, based on the rates of sale and purchase of freehold plots that had taken place in Kosti and Shendi, taking the averages realised per square metre. The result was as follows:

	£S
1st class residential area, freehold per sq. metre	0.750
2nd class residential area, freehold per sq. metre	0.500
3rd class residential area, freehold per sq. metre	0.400

Residential land held on lease from the Government offered no difficult problem in valuation. The committee had already been supplied with the terms of lease issued under old arrangements and granted for auction sales under the town land scheme of 1947. The committee decided that it would be fair to take the average premium realised in recent auctions in Wadi Halfa, namely:

	£S
1st class residential area, leasehold per sq. metre	0.250
2nd class residential area, leasehold per sq. metre	0.170
3rd class residential area, leasehold per sq. metre	0.100

Every leaseholder was entitled to compensation only for the remaining period of his lease.

For the villages an arbitrary estimate of £S 0.500 per square metre was agreed, and this had to apply to residential plots held on freehold terms wherever found.

In the case of *commercial land*, it was again expected that few people, if any, would be affected by the committee estimates. The general opinion among shopowners led me to believe that even those who wished to emigrate to places other than Khashm el Girba would prefer to build their shops in New Halfa market.

As with the residential and agricultural land, no significant sales of commercial land had taken place for the past two decades. Before the committee meetings, the Commissioner for Compensation and the legal adviser came to Wadi Halfa, and the three of us discussed the valuation of commercial land at length. I had told them that all leases of commercial plots without exception had terminated a long time before, and that no one had troubled either to issue a new lease for them, or to transfer their ownership to the Government. My personal view was that, had things been normal in Wadi Halfa, I would have renewed the leases, since the buildings erected on the plots were in a satisfactory state and, in the majority of cases, the shops in question were owner-occupied. If we applied the letter of the law, they would be deprived of any sort of compensation, and would in effect suffer great injustice through no fault of their own. My two colleagues agreed with me that in the circumstances they should be considered *bona fide* leaseholders, and consequently entitled to compensation. We then visited various shops and collected figures which gave us a good idea of the rent level. We also sought neutral estimates of reasonable prices for commercial land. The premiums paid in the auction of Dabarosa market in Halfa town were also studied, and the Commissioner of Lands furnished the committee with figures for the sale of certain freehold shops which had taken place in Kosti, Wad Medani and Omdurman. With all this information we were able to derive a reasonable yardstick for the valuation of commercial land in Wadi Halfa town, as follows:

	£S
Freehold 1st class commercial area, per sq. metre	1.500
Freehold 2nd class commercial area, per sq. metre	1.000

For rental leasehold the committee took the average premium realised in the auction of Dabarosa market, which stood at:

	£S
1st class commercial area, leasehold, per sq. metre	0.750
2nd class commercial area, leasehold, per sq. metre	0.500

Compensation was to be paid for the remainder of the lease period only.

Other land property such as cinemas, mines and other immovable property not included in the above were left to be assessed by a technical committee, to be appointed by the Commissioner for Compensation.

In the *evaluation of buildings*, the committee recommended that all buildings in the town of Wadi Halfa should be measured in cubic metres, and that compensation should be calculated in accordance with the current rate approved by the director of works for each type of building. The depreciation factor should be taken into account. In the villages, compensation should be calculated on assessed rates for the plinth area of the buildings.

On 12 March at the request of the Commission, I submitted proposals for economic assistance to enable the inhabitants to overcome the expected difficulties of the transitional period between their departure from Wadi Halfa and the collection of their first harvest in the new home.

This period would inevitably be the most critical of all the stages of resettlement. The families would undergo some hardship and, if not aided, would not be capable of shouldering their domestic responsibilities, or fulfilling their obligations as farmers. Part of their baggage was expected to be damaged in transit and would have to be repaired on arrival. The necessary expenses for daily domestic requirements would have to be met. The cultivation of the land, with all the activities that it would involve, and the collection and marketing of the first crop, would place a heavy financial burden on heads of families during the first months at Khashm el Girba. All these problems, if not solved in some way, would expose the inhabitants to economic and psychological setbacks, and cause a general deterioration in the situation following the resettlement.

To lighten the burden during those crucial months, we had to choose a time for the actual departure to Khashm el Girba, when the economic situation of the families would be at its best and agricultural activities at a minimum. These conditions would only apply to one period of the year: from the end of April to October, immediately after the gathering of the winter crop. They could either sell the harvest for a cash return, or take it with them for subsistence in their new home. The value of the winter crop in the affected area was estimated at £S 75,154, of which £S 35,499 belonged to the villages of the first stage of emigration, north of Halfa town. The average revenue of the crop per family in these villages would come to £S 14.70, the total number of families being

2,405. The main crop was of course wheat, followed by beans and onions. In the southern section the total number of families was 3,440, 1,327 of which were from Degheim village alone. The average revenue per family fell to £S 11.50, due to the scarcity of land in the Batn el Hajar area. Halfa town was excluded, as its inhabitants were not cultivators.

This suggestion, though it would not solve all the difficulties, would nevertheless contribute somewhat to lightening the pressure on the inhabitants. Other proposals for lessening the difficulties of the situation were included in some suggestions which I put forward. I maintained that before suggesting ways and means of helping the inhabitants in their domestic needs and their obligations as farmers, certain facts relating to the domestic and land economy of their existing home should be considered. In all the villages without exception the domestic revenue depended on these sources: the date crop, postal money orders from absentee heads of families, and limited rotational crops normally cultivated by mothers with the help of their children. The social and economic survey carried out by the Department of Statistics had shown that the flow of expenditure was more regular than that of income, and in most cases income was falling short of daily expenditure. Most families were running into debt and living partly on credit. When they emigrated to Khashm el Girba, they would find that all their sources of income, other than the postal money orders, would have basically changed. Their staple date crop, with its steady revenue flowing annually without involving much labour, would be lost. The mothers who were able to cultivate small areas of land could not be expected to cope with the obligations of cultivating 15 *feddans* in Khashm el Girba.

To fill this gap and to make family heads of both sexes better able to shoulder their responsibilities as successful farmers, I suggested that cash compensation for the date trees, or at least a reasonable instalment of it, should be paid before they left Wadi Halfa. If this arrangement were approved it would enable me to take the initiative of advising the inhabitants to use part of it to establish a plantation syndicate or a big co-operative society, to be financed by shares levied at the rate of £S 1 per date tree. This would raise a capital of more than a third of a million pounds, which would suffice for buying tractors, harvesters, workshops and means of transport for marketing their produce. The board of directors of this organisation could levy reasonable charges for the services to be offered to the tenants — to cover the running cost and depreciation of the machines — and to realise some profit to the shareholders. These fees should be collected at harvest time. The necessary skilled labour could be provided by recruiting a team of men from Wadi Halfa and sending them as early as possible to the Institute of Mechanised Farming at Tozi, in the Fung area, or attaching them to

the Gezira Board workshops to be trained in driving and maintaining the agricultural machines. If we could succeed in creating this organisation we could be certain that the Halfa people would be successful farmers in the new scheme, and that the future progress of their economic life would be assured. Moreover, out of the compensation payment, the families could pay off their debts before departure and start their domestic economy in their new home on a cash basis.

My second point was that the Ministry of Agriculture should confine the first rotation to early maturing crops, so that the inhabitants could collect their first crop as quickly as possible. Thirdly, the widest possible area in the experimental farm should be planted with vegetables, to ensure a constant supply to the inhabitants at the time of their arrival. Fourthly, all government posts in the resettlement area should as far as possible be filled by Nubian officials, whose families would need their presence during the transitional period, in addition to the financial help their monthly salaries would provide in meeting daily expenses. Moreover, I recommended that priority of selection for all new jobs in the resettlement scheme should be given to Nubians, and particularly to absentees coming from abroad to live with their families. Finally, the Ministry of Animal Production should provide a sufficient number of slaughter animals to supply the market with meat, and milch cows should be sold on credit to the families to supply milk for their children. Their cost could be collected at harvest time.

These were my proposals for solving the difficulties I foresaw in the transitional period. The World Food Programme later concluded an agreement with the Sudan Government by which they undertook to contribute the following items of food to be supplied to the inhabitants during the first year after resettlement:

	<i>tons</i>
Wheat	7200
Canned peaches	650
Dry grapes	550
Milk powder, skimmed	250
Milk powder, full fat	210
Seed oil	360

These amounts were calculated on the following daily ration per individual:

	<i>grammes</i>
Wheat	400
Canned fruit	35
Dry fruit	30
Skimmed powdered milk (for adults)	5.5
Skimmed powdered milk (for pregnant women and children)	40
Full fat powdered milk per person	12
Seed oil	20

The World Food Programme of the U.N. offers such aid as a kind of encouragement and contribution to governments, to help them in development schemes of this kind, which aim to increase world food production. It should not be confused with charity aid, such as that given by the Refugees Fund. This gratifying aid removed the largest obstacle lying ahead, and gave me a free hand to plan the timing of the emigration programme. The rest of my suggestions were implemented by the Commission, and the inhabitants followed my advice by creating co-operative societies in their new villages.

## PREPARING THE EVACUATION PROGRAMME

By the end of March I had started to prepare a preliminary programme for the emigration. With the help of the census report I calculated the number of passengers and the amount of baggage from each village, and the railway waggons needed to transport them. Similar calculations were made for Wadi Halfa town. In a meeting with the railway inspector the number of trains needed for the passengers and baggage were assessed. It was decided to attach animal waggons to the goods trains.

The whole operation was divided into three stages. The first stage would cover Wadi Halfa town and all the villages on both banks of the Nile north of it, namely Faras East, Faras West, Sarra East, Sarra West, Dibeira, Argin and Ashkeit. They were scheduled to emigrate in 1963. The second stage would consist of Angash, Degheim, Magarab island, the Kunuz village near Buhen Gemai, Kokki islands and Murshid. These would emigrate in 1964. The last stage — including Saras, Semna, Dawashat and the villages of Akasha *omodia* — were left to 1965.

Many problems presented themselves to me while I was preparing this programme. Having no precedent to follow, I relied wholly on my imagination, and so guessed the issues likely to arise before our departure. In the first place, we had to expect that most of the absentee heads of families would come to join their dependents before the departure to Khashm el Girba. The number of these absentees nearly equalled that of residents in many villages. Allowance had to be made for them on the trip to the new home, and many complete additional trains thus had to be included in the programme.

The state of health of many passengers required much attention. There would, at any time, be the old and weak, the completely bed-ridden, the sick in hospital, advanced pregnancies and new deliveries. Not all these cases could be expected to endure a 2,000-km. journey without medical care. So every passenger train was to be provided with a mobile hospital under the care of a medical officer, with a small theatre, a midwife and medical attendants.

The livestock, on the other hand, should be provided with sufficient

fodder and water and attendants to accompany them throughout the journey.

Packing materials required for wrapping and tying up the baggage were assessed at 20,000 used jute sacks, to be requisitioned from the Gezira Board, and 20,000 coils of rope and 15,000 baskets to be brought from the town of Abu Hamad. These materials should be distributed to the inhabitants in good time before the baggage was required for loading. In addition to this we would need a fleet of twenty lorries to carry the baggage from the dwelling-houses to the railway station, and as the loading process would be continuous, two relay teams, each of at least 100 porters, should be available to load the baggage on to the lorries, and then from the lorries into the railway wagons. For the villages on the west bank the process of loading and reloading would be doubled as the baggage would need to cross the river by a steamer.

In a meeting with the railway inspector, Sayed El Dirdiri el Sawi, we discussed the necessary railway arrangements. The route would follow the main Khartoum line to Atbara junction, then the Port Sudan line to Haya junction, whence it would divert south to Kassala, and then to Khashm el Girba. As the Halfa-Atbara line was built of light-weight rails, the trains would have to be pulled by steam locomotives to Atbara, and from there on by electric diesel engine. The journey from Wadi Halfa to Khashm el Girba would take forty hours. It was agreed that the household baggage should be loaded into the wagons in accordance with the order of residence in Khashm el Girba, so that the baggage of neighbours could be carried in the same wagon. Packages belonging to one family had to bear a specific mark, and a list of the names of family heads, the numbers and marks of their packages and the address of their new houses in Khashm el Girba, should be fixed to the inside and outside of the wagon doors, enabling the Commissioner for Resettlement to identify and sort out all pieces and send them to the houses before the owners' arrival. The passenger trains on the other hand should consist of a hospital coach for the sick and very old, a combined first- and second-class coach for pregnant women and new deliveries, and third-class coaches for the rest of the passengers. To avoid congestion and to make the journey as comfortable as possible, a train-load of passengers was to be reduced from the normal level of 800 passengers to 600 only. Although all the passengers would be advised beforehand to limit their accompanied baggage to what they would need on the journey, a reserve goods wagon was to be attached to each passenger train, to cope with the expected excess baggage. It was further agreed that the times of departure of the goods and passenger trains should not be more than twenty-four hours apart. Our programme was to provide for sending two batches a week.



We then made a brief tour by motor trolley along the Faras line, marking suitable sites for stations at the nearest points to the villages of the east bank, and opposite the villages of the west bank. We crossed by launch to the west bank to decide on suitable sites for steamer dockings.

The baggage of the Kokki islands offered a very difficult problem. The inhabitants lived in scattered houses on the rocky islands of the Second Cataract, separated by deep and narrow gorges through which flowed torrential streams. No vessel of any sort could reach them to pick up their household belongings and bring them to the river bank. We had no choice but to resort to the primitive method of the inhabitants, by using rafts of logs and planks fastened together, strengthened with inflated water skins tied to their sides to increase their loading-capacity. When these rafts were loaded, they had to be pulled bodily from one island to another, then unloaded, and the whole cargo carried across to another raft in the gorge on the other side, and so on until it reached the bank. To make matters more difficult, we discovered that the east bank, opposite the Second Cataract, was very high and almost vertical; no car could come down to water level, nor could any porter climb it. Eventually we had to carry all the baggage to the west bank where the slope was gentle, although it was covered with loose sand, and so could only be negotiated by Land-rovers. From there the loads would go to Argin ferry opposite to Halfa town, and cross from there.

With all this information I drew up the preliminary programme for the first and second stages. We would need fifty-five passenger trains and sixty-six goods trains, with 216 animal wagons attached to them. The third and last stage, which was far from the railway station and would need more motor transport, was left for consideration later.

One more point remained to be settled. During the twenty-four hours after the loading of baggage and before their departure, the passengers would have no cooking facilities, and so would have to be fed. Moreover meals for the journey would have to be provided. At a meeting with some notables it was agreed that a lump sum payment of 50 piastres per head would suffice for both purposes, and that the passengers could arrange for the food that would suit them. We had also agreed that the Ministry of Commerce would approve an additional quota of flour to Halfa bakeries to meet the demand for bread during the emigration.

In Khashm el Girba, meanwhile, Messrs. Torno had met with some misfortune. While they were blasting the trench for the dam foundation, they struck a fissure in the rock sediment, and had to excavate

deeper to meet a safe layer. This operation cost them money, energy and much-needed time, but when this problem had been overcome, they had another stroke of bad luck. On 27 May there was a most unexpected and unusual spate in the river Atbara. Water rushed from the high mountains of Ethiopia into the river tributaries and raced through the gorge, washing out the coffer dam and filling the foundation ditch. It receded a few days later leaving a vast amount of mess on the dam site. It took some time to put things in order and resume work.

Holzmann had made an efficient start on the main canal, and were going ahead at a good pace. L'Industrie Electrique of Paris were beginning to pile up their equipment for the construction of the transmission line towers. The survey department had sent a team of surveyors to the resettlement area with their theodolites, maps and chainmen, to mark the layout of the town and villages and demarcate the building blocks, a tedious job which kept them continuously pacing the sites, laying the boundary stones and hammering pegs at the corners of the plots that were to be developed. The Ministry of Irrigation, with its bulldozers, excavators and carriages, was moving earth along the branch canals, in accordance with a strict schedule.

In the meantime Khashm el Girba village was growing on account of the influx of workers from all parts of the Sudan to find jobs with the contracting companies. Many restaurants and coffee houses appeared in the market centre, and the shops were filled with consumer goods. A commodious rest house was built by the Commission on the bank of the river Atbara close to the village, and new offices for the Resettlement Commissioner and the police post were erected. An irrigation colony, with a beautiful two-storey resthouse, had started to emerge on the western side of the village, half-way to the dam site. The railway department had constructed a special line to the dam works and other lines to the station with extra unloading equipment to cope with the increased traffic in building materials. What had once been desolate, marked only by the squalid huts of a small village normally used as a resting station by the Shukria Arabs while watering their camels, had developed into a thriving modern settlement with human activity and the movement of heavy machinery.

Back at Wadi Halfa, the Ministry of Health began to launch a widespread campaign against infectious diseases in the area. The operation was divided into two divisions, according to speciality and technique. The physicians, with their teams of nurses and attendants, had a large pharmacy and laboratories for the examination of blood, urine and faeces. The X-ray unit of Halfa hospital had extra staff and equipment. The main task of this team was to eradicate all infectious diseases, particularly bilharzia, malaria and tuberculosis. It set up

centres in the villages, and began one of the biggest undertakings in the history of medical services in the Sudan. Every individual throughout the area was thoroughly examined and provided with a card showing every detail of his medical record. Sick persons were carefully sorted out, and given the best treatment possible. Bilharzia cases were given special attention, and a big hospital camp was pegged out in an isolated area, where all the tuberculosis cases were admitted and given treatment. Many of them were cured, but advanced cases were followed up in Khashm el Girba, where treatment continued in isolation wards. Malaria cases were dealt with clinically and the rest given mass prophylactics. Along with this curative activity, a great effort was being made in Khashm el Girba to sterilize the area before the arrival of Halfa people. Bilharzia cases among the neighbouring Arabs were controlled and a big operation was launched to clear the river banks and the dam area of snails. Tuberculosis cases among the Arabs were attended to, and the World Health Organisation contributed to help exterminate malaria in the scheme area. All cases were treated, the healthy were protected with prophylactics and a strenuous effort was made to clear the whole area of anopheles, the malaria-carrying mosquito.

The second division consisted of the ophthalmologists, led by Dr. Mohamed Sherif, with a team of fifteen assistants, including a laboratory technician and a theatre attendant. They came to Wadi Halfa in February 1962, and established their office in a rented house near the hospital. In 1961 the W.H.O. had made a general survey of eye diseases in Wadi Halfa, and classified the types of infection clinically into trachoma and general eye infection. It was shown that 68 percent of the population of the area were suffering from general eye disease, and 89 percent were infected with trachoma. This survey was used as a base-line for beginning treatment.

The control measures were planned in accordance with the W.H.O. advice. All the population were registered by house-to-house visitors, and mass treatment was given to every individual, sick and healthy alike. The treatment continued for three months in Wadi Halfa, and was planned to be repeated after arrival in Khashm el Girba. Immediately after the emigration a survey was carried out — with a gratifying result. About 80 percent of those treated in Wadi Halfa were completely cured. However, in spite of that, Dr. Mohamed Sherif resumed the treatment for four years after the emigration, and supplemented it with regular health education. He thus succeeded in eradicating one of the most widespread diseases which were endemic in Wadi Halfa.

Meanwhile, I was occupied with the southern part of the district and the administrative problems which would face the inhabitants after the disappearance of Wadi Halfa. The effects of the High Dam lake would

go as far south as Dal Cataract, and would cover the whole area inhabited by the Halfawin Nubians, in addition to Akasha *omodia* in the Sukkot area. But the area further south, stretching along both banks of the Nile between Dal Cataract and the village of Abu Fatma on the boundary of the Dongola district, which was inhabited by Sukkot and Mahas, would not be flooded. This area constituted the greater part of Halfa district and was more densely populated than the part that would be flooded. Like the Halfa reach of the Nile, it suffered from a shortage of cultivable land, but neither lacked it completely like Batn el Hajar. The Mahas country was better off in land and wealth than Sukkot, but the latter was famous for the excellence of its dates. Both areas were linked by road to Halfa town, which was their main market, their administrative capital and as the railway terminal and harbour for north-bound steamers, their only outlet to the rest of the world. They had no direct administration of their own, but were incorporated in Halfa rural council of which they were the majority of members. They had instead their own native administration, each unit under a separate *nazir*, and native courts, which dealt with petty cases under the supervision of the resident magistrate of Halfa. For personal cases they had in Abri, the centre of Sukkot, their own Sharia court which used to move periodically to the Mahas area to decide on Sharia disputes there. Both sections had their police posts, manned by a small number of foot police and a few camel corporals to combat smuggling. They had their own village schools, and intermediate schools for boys and girls at Delgo and Abri. There were two hospitals in the area and many dispensaries scattered among the villages. They had two small markets in their chief villages, consisting of small shops run mostly by agents of the main merchants of Halfa town. The disappearance of Wadi Halfa would therefore create an administrative and commercial vacuum which had to be filled before the final eclipse of the district headquarters and the main market.

There were two alternative solutions to the administrative problem which had to be carefully weighed before a decision could be taken. One was that they should be annexed to Dongola rural council and aligned with the Danagla; the other was that they should have their own local council and independent government institutions. The first alternative was supported by the argument that the Danagla were essentially Nubians, and were kinsmen of the Sukkot and Mahas. The geography of the southern part of Halfa district was similar to that of Dongola and might be considered as the continuation of Dongola reach. The population of the area was 70,000, which was too small to warrant the establishment of a strong local council. Finally, their revenue, which was derived mainly from date tax and to a limited extent from land tax,

could not cover the cost of administration, unless this were supplemented by a deficit grant from the central government. On the other hand there were certain points which opposed their amalgamation with the Dongola administration. There were social and economic differences between them. Their mode of life and their ecology were more Halfawi than Dongolawi, and their Halfawi dialect was different from the Danagla tongue. Historically they were associated with the Halfa people and had never been linked with their neighbours to the south. Commercially they always looked north; all their produce was either marketed in Halfa or shipped from Halfa to Egypt. A large proportion of their date produce had no market in the Sudan, particularly the good-quality dates with high sugar content, which were unpopular with the Sudan date traders as they were susceptible to pest damage and did not keep for very long. This type fetched a good price in Egypt, and so had to be exported to that traditional market. Moreover, all the petty traders of this area were agents of wholesalers in Halfa, who financed them at the time of harvest to enable them to buy the produce at a certain rate of commission. Finally, the Sukkot and Mahas people had little love for the Danagla and opposed the idea of being dominated by them.

All these points tended to give more weight to the establishment of an independent council, rather than to the annexation of the area to Dongola. With this in mind I recommended that they should have their own local council, either in Delgo which was the biggest centre, or at some other suitable place on which the two sections might agree. The two police posts, which had previously been dependent on Halfa district, should be reinforced and placed under the supervision of a police officer to be stationed either at Abri or Delgo, whichever was selected for the council headquarters. Civil and criminal cases could be dealt with at periodic sessions by the resident magistrate of Dongola. The Sharia judge of Abri could handle the personal cases of the area as before. The office of the agricultural officer of Delgo would be affiliated to that of the inspector of agriculture at Kerma. As for date marketing, co-operative societies, financed by the agricultural bank, would take the place of village traders, and thus commercial activity would continue. The disappearance of the dates of Halfa and Egyptian Nubia was expected to give them the monopoly of the date market in Egypt, with the result that prices would go up.

Communication with the new port presented the most difficult problem. The only road that linked the area with Halfa port would be submerged by the lake for a distance of 120 km., from Farka village to the railway terminal. I recommended that the road section of the Ministry of Works should reconnoitre the east side of the lake

boundary with a possible view to opening a new road from Farka either to station No. 4, in the Atmur desert, or direct to the site of the proposed new port. I urged that this had to be done quickly to avoid traffic congestion along the southern reach and the complete isolation of the area. Meanwhile the future means of surface communication with Egypt were under discussion at a high level and a solution had to be reached before the emigration of our steamers to Khartoum. At present our fleet consisted of flat-bottomed steamers which were reckoned to be unsuitable for navigation in deep water. If it was decided to continue navigation between the new port and Aswan, they had to be replaced with small ships with deep pointed keels. The Sudan Government had been running the steamer service at a loss for the past sixty years, and were not interested in taking on another headache. As long as their railway line terminated at the border with Egypt, they were all for a rail link between the two countries; the Egyptians on the other hand, finding it very costly to bring their railway line 500 km. across the desert inside their frontier from Aswan to Wadi Halfa, were inclined rather to accept the inadequate budget for navigation than to meet the cost of building such a long railway line. However, it would be some time before the proposed ships could be built and floated to the High Dam lake ready for operation. This might well take some years, during which the exporting activity of the area would be at stake: it would either come to an end completely or take the long way round to Port Sudan, from where it would be shipped to Suez. There was little hope that the Egyptians would appreciate our local difficulty and find some means to fill the gap left by the departure of our steamers, which were scheduled to leave finally with the flood of 1963. In any case this problem was beyond my scope, and my duty ended with my submitting an appreciation of the situation as I could foresee it.

With all these points in view I sent a long report with a draft budget for the future administration of Sukkot and Mahas, including security requirements. This report, dated 29 June 1962, was addressed to the Governor, Northern Province, with a copy to the Commission.

## COMPENSATION AND POPULAR FEELING I

By July it was officially brought to my notice that the deadline for beginning water storage in the High Dam reservoir had been postponed to July 1964. As long before as May 1961, we had received an indication of this from Reuter, who quoted a statement, made by Dr. Veronese in Khartoum during his visit in connection with archaeological work in Nubia, that work on the High Dam would be delayed for fourteen months, owing to the unexpectedly slow preparations; however, a denial by the Egyptian authorities led the Sudan Government to ignore the statement and stick to the original deadline set out in the agreement. It seemed that the Egyptians had at last been compelled to face reality and declare the facts. The delay was attributed to major changes made by the Russians on the German design of the High Dam, and a slowing-down in the preparatory works due to insufficient labour, machines and power. This news was welcomed everywhere in the Sudan, particularly by the Commission, whose plans for the construction of the villages and town in the resettlement area were nowhere near completion. To Torno the news came as a godsend, since they had lost much time in deepening the dam foundation and making good the damage done to their coffer dam and trench by the unexpected spate mentioned above. The Ministry of Irrigation would have time to complete the excavation of their canals, build their regulators and dig their *Abu Ishreen*\* to irrigate the farms. The medical missions at Wadi Halfa could redouble their efforts and cure more patients before the emigration. The Commissioner for Compensation could check all the enumeration and compensation lists at his ease and prepare them for payment. As for me, it would offer the opportunity to revise and tie up all the details for the emigration programme, and a breathing-space to regain my strength for the final departure.

\* Small branch channels that irrigate twenty tenancies.

In mid-August the Commissioner for Compensation visited Wadi Halfa to establish his office in the town and attend to his duties in the affected area. I was pleased to hand over to him all the lists of date and fruit trees and the land register. Supervision of the Sharia courts was also passed to him. He realised with gratitude that we had done the most difficult part of his work. The assessment of houses and commercial buildings still lay ahead and we drew up plans for carrying it out. We made a draft budget for the appointment of three committees, each consisting of a compensation officer, a public works engineer, a surveyor, an estimator, three local assessors, two accountants, three clerks, one land registration officer, four markers, a messenger and a policeman. These committees were to work in separate areas; two of them were assigned to the villages lying respectively on the east and west banks of the Nile north of Halfa town, while the third was allotted the town and the *omodia* of Degheim.

It should be mentioned here that the list of rates approved by the Ministry of Works for assessment of buildings did not include the rates for crude mud and mud-brick buildings, and we were advised to establish our own yardsticks based on the current cost of mud buildings in the locality. We sought the opinion of the district engineer of Wadi Halfa, Sayed Hassan Taha, a Nubian from Degheim village. He took us to his own house in the village, which was built of mud in the local style. As we knew its cost, we could easily calculate a price schedule for compensation on mud buildings. By means of a short tour of nearby villages and random inspections of some houses, we soon realised that not all mud buildings were alike in their construction. Some had better roofs than others, and some had good joinery while others only had small openings in the walls for ventilation. For this reason the application of the plinth area system for evaluation would not be fair, so we decided to carry out careful estimates of all the houses in the villages. The committees should use the house census as a guide, and for the record a sketch plan had to be made of every house assessed.

Until that time no official listing of house-owners wishing to go to Khashm el Girba had been carried out; the Government had already declared that the emigration to Khashm el Girba was not compulsory, but that housing and farming facilities would be given to those wishing to resettle there. Those who wished to resettle in any other part of the Sudan should make their own arrangements for housing and work; the Government's responsibility would be limited to free transport. Although it was generally known that about 85 per cent of the inhabitants had already made up their minds to go to Khashm el Girba, we felt that the Commission should be furnished with an accurate total of houses required there. The valuation of houses gave us that opportunity. We



had to be very careful to avoid any impression that the committees were prejudiced on the assessment issue. We eventually decided that the assessment should take place first and after its declaration a house-owner should be asked whether he wanted cash compensation or preferred to have a house in Khashm el Girba for his assessed dwellings. Once the choice had been made it would be final, and no subsequent change of mind could be considered. After agreeing on these principles, we decided that the Commissioner for Compensation should publish a notice to this effect, announcing 4 September as the starting date for evaluation, with a time-table covering all the villages in the three areas concerned. In the meantime the Commission was asked to circulate a request to all departments to the effect that Nubian employees with house property in the affected area should be allowed leave so that they could visit Wadi Halfa on the stipulated dates.

On 19 August the notice was issued, under Section 15 of the Wadi Halfa Resettlement Ordinance 1962, and published in the press. Immediately, the anti-Khashm el Girba ranks joined the anti-government elements and formed a secret organisation which they called the 'Resistance Movement'. Their aim was, through guile or intimidation, to induce the inhabitants to stand against the emigration to Khashm el Girba and to resist the application of the compensation act, particularly on house property. They sent their emissaries to Dibeira and Ashkeit, where they found no response. In Gemai, Dabarosa and Argin South they had little success, but gained the support of some extremists. Realising the failure of their mission, they resolved to stage a violent demonstration on 4 September, and to cause widespread chaos by burning the petroleum depots, the Commission offices, goods under clearance in the customs enclosure and the shops of pro-Khashm el Girba merchants. They also planned to damage the telephone and telegraph wires and the railway line passing through Degheim village. By the end of August leaflets were circulating in Degheim village urging the inhabitants to join the riot, and slogans denouncing the emigration to Khashm el Girba were inscribed on the walls. Pro-Khashm el Girba citizens came to my office complaining of the intimidation and provocation they were being subjected to in their village. In the meantime information was accumulating in the police station about the organisation and its leaders, and the scope and aims of the planned riot. I reviewed the situation with the police officer and the officer in charge of Halfa garrison, and we all agreed that it was deteriorating quickly, and that unless we took quick action there might be serious consequences. We therefore decided that the fourteen leaders of the organisation should be arrested and sent to Khartoum to be detained for a month. At the same time we placed all the public services and office

buildings under strict guard. We sent a long coded telegram to the Ministry of Interior and the security office at Atbara describing the situation and our actions. On 1 September the leaders of the organisation were arrested and held in the army barracks, pending their transfer to Khartoum. To avoid undesirable public feeling we decided to move them by car after midnight to Station No. 1 in the Atmur desert; from there they were slipped onto the express to Khartoum in almost total secrecy. By mid-day the news had leaked out, and a procession of 200 women came from Degheim village. They halted by the district office and threw dust in the air, shouting slogans against the Government. The police were warned not to take action against them but to keep them well separated from the public, who by that time had started to gather near the scene. They kept up their shouting for an hour and then dispersed. That was the end of the 'Resistance Movement'.

On 4 September the first assessment committee went to Faras East and began the evaluation of houses. The members received a friendly welcome from the inhabitants; this encouraged them and they started work in good spirits. The first house was sketched and measured, and the value calculated at £S 300. When the result was announced, it was received favourably, reflecting the fairness of the method we had applied. The owner decided to go to Khashm el Girba, so he wanted compensation in kind. Then the marker dipped his big brush into the bucket of lime wash and made a large mark on the wall near the gate to show that the house had been assessed for compensation. Seven houses were covered on the first day, with the same response. The news spread the same day to all the villages, creating a good atmosphere for our three committees to progress with their work uninterrupted. In the following days the committees, having gained more experience, were able to work faster and after a week they had doubled their speed.

The Commissioner for Compensation finally came to Wadi Halfa on 8 September, and supervised the assessment committees. He brought with him a bundle of forms, covering all aspects of compensation. Up to his arrival, the arrangements for payment of compensation had posed a big problem, which had occupied my mind for some time. All the lists had to be scrutinized, and the property registered against the name of each person assessed and reduced to cash terms. Then each person's entitlements on the different lists had to be sorted out and computed in a final combined list for payment. This would involve strenuous and stringent accountancy and a high degree of accuracy. The slightest error could cause the whole mass of the simple inhabitants to doubt the precision of all other calculations. The length of time needed for this transaction would add to our difficulties.

Then the method by which compensation should be paid had to be

carefully thought out. If it were to be paid in cash, it would be a heavy task. Nearly 30,000 people were likely to turn up to receive their money; and the amount involved was estimated at £S 3 million. The cashiers would require extra fingers on their hands to cope with the job in the short time remaining. Furthermore, the result of such a large sum being paid in liquid currency would be an artificial rise in the prices of commodities and consequent inflation. I could not imagine these Nubians roaming about, their pockets bulging with money, without being tempted to extravagance. To discourage this anticipated waste of money and avoid the heavy burden of cash payment, I was intending to suggest to the Commission that all monetary compensation should be assigned to a commercial bank for payment. This would encourage all recipients to open current and deposit accounts, and would make them more inclined to save than to spend.

To make the lists as clear and simple as possible, I approached the Department of Statistics about the possibility of editing, punching and computing them in the final form for payment. My proposal aimed at tabulating all lists alphabetically according to villages, then creating a card index system, using different colours for the different items of compensation, which would show the cash entitlement of every payee in relation to his specific property. These cards were to be set in a catalogue and retained in the office for reference. Next to that would be an intermediate card specifying all items of property and the compensation claimed; one of these should be punched for every individual claimant and issued to him in good time for revision and checking before payment. Lastly, a master list showing the totals of payees' cash claims should be made up for every village, to be sent to the bank for payment.

The Department of Statistics agreed to my suggestions, and sent two senior statisticians to Wadi Halfa. After a careful examination of our list, they agreed that their computer could do the job for us, but said the punching and editing would take six months. This was not serious, since we had fifteen months; our main difficulty would be overcome. I was grateful for their co-operation and informed them that I would discuss the question first with the Commissioner for Compensation, Sayed Ahmed el Tahir who, I thought, would be very glad of their help. I explained my proposal to him and mentioned the kind offer of the Department of Statistics, urging him to contact them as soon as possible. His immediate reaction was negative; he said that six months was too long to wait, and the clerks and accountants could do the whole job by hand in a shorter time. As Sayed Ahmed was a re-employed pensioner my first thought was that, like all old people, he had no faith in the blessings of modern electronics. Anyway, that was the end of my

plan. It should be recorded that he later found himself entangled in a web of detail, and that he had to hurry to keep pace with the emigration programme, leaving on one side various issues which took him years to clear up in Khashm el Girba.

The printed forms prepared by Sayed Ahmed el Tahir were adopted from the tables we were using, with columns for cash entries intended to be filled in when the rates of compensation were decided. One column in the form for house compensation had attracted my notice. It was assigned to the collection of the cash difference between the assessed value of their houses in Wadi Halfa and the cost of constructing their new homes in Khashm el Girba. This had made me scratch my head. It meant that the people of Wadi Halfa would leave for their new home saddled with a debt of millions of pounds. On 10 September I sent a letter to the Commission urging them to persuade the government to reconsider their decision. I used the following arguments.

The government had decided to construct the houses in Khashm el Girba to a high standard, and with first-class materials, without coming to any agreement with the inhabitants about the payment for the difference in cost. The sentiment shown by President Abboud towards the crisis of Wadi Halfa, and his repeated promises to the inhabitants that he had resolved to compensate them with a better home planned on modern lines, had created a deep conviction that the improvement in housing condition was the one reward they could expect to receive for the sacrifice of their homeland. If the government insisted on collecting the difference in housing costs, there would be no difference between the Halfawin and the local tribes who might voluntarily resettle in the scheme area, except that the Nubians would be living in good dwellings built at their own expense.

The cost of the average house in Wadi Halfa was assessed at £S 250, and by a simple calculation the total difference in housing cost could safely be estimated at £4 million. It was quite unthinkable, therefore, that the inhabitants would accept the idea of emigrating to Khashm el Girba, loaded with such a heavy burden of debt. The situation would be made even more difficult by the poverty of the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants, whose total savings at any one time often did not exceed £S 10 or £S 20. Could such people even imagine what millions of pounds meant?

Public debts on such a large scale were unprecedented in Sudanese history, and in this case the debt would not be applied for a profitable enterprise with a regular return, out of which it could eventually be settled. My own belief was that the collection of such a colossal debt was almost impossible, unless the government were prepared to drive the occupants out and take possession of their houses. The only hope

for the return of this money was that the economic conditions of the inhabitants in their new home would improve so much that they would be able to contribute to the public treasury through taxation.

For these reasons, I recommended that the government should reconsider their decision and include the difference in cost as a gift from the government to the inhabitants, to compensate for the sacrifice of their homeland in the interests of their country. This convinced the government, and my recommendation was approved. Unforeseen circumstances were to swell the margin of difference to about £S 11 million.

In mid-September, the chairman and some members of the Commission paid a visit of inspection to Wadi Halfa. They were greeted by good weather in the area, both meteorologically and socially. A long programme of visits was arranged for them, covering all villages north of the town. In all these villages, they attended meetings with the inhabitants and the discussions throughout were constructive. The points raised were confined to the plans prepared for housing and social services in Khashm el Girba. There was one general complaint about the decisions of the assessment boards in determining compensation for certain houses. In Nubia, the families of absentee husbands usually lived in big houses with brothers-in-law or fathers-in-law; each house so occupied was partitioned into separate quarters, providing independent accommodation for each family, but the plot was communally owned. When the assessment boards considered such houses, they considered the whole plot as a single residence, and so decided to provide only one house in Khashm el Girba in compensation - hence the complaint. Sayed Hassan and the members of the Commission examined various houses of this type on their inspection, and found that every partitioned quarter was in fact an independent dwelling, and eventually decided to provide a new house for each part in separate occupation.

Apart from this complaint, the committees were progressing well; but we soon realised that the remaining volume of work was so great that the boards could not be expected to finish it in time, working at their present pace. We therefore obtained immediate approval to appoint three more committees, to speed up the work and ensure completion of the task within the time scheduled. The co-operation of the inhabitants had contributed in no small degree to the achievement of that goal and would continue to do so, and I wish to mention here with appreciation and praise the traditional generosity of the Nubians with which all the committees, census and medical teams and Sharia courts were treated. Wherever they went, they were not allowed by the inhabitants to cook any food, and they were treated as guests by everybody in the village. Even when they were working with anti-Khashm el Girba people, this well-established social habit never failed.

## BUILDING THE RESETTLEMENT AREA

In the following pages I relate how the Sudan government tried to effect the construction of the villages and New Halfa town in the resettlement area through an international engineering firm, and the difficulties which made the attempt stagger from one obstacle to another, until it finally collapsed. I shall also give an account of the sequence of events in the relations of the engineering firm, Turriff Construction Sudan Ltd., with the Sudan Government at the critical period when the days of Wadi Halfa were numbered, and the whole question of the re-accommodation of its displaced inhabitants still hung in the balance. The issue is now in the hands of the International Court of Justice, and I shall therefore keep strictly to the salient facts of the story, refraining as far as possible from giving any personal opinion.

An advertisement was published throughout the world on 28 August 1961, calling for international tenders for the construction of the farmers' houses and the public service buildings in the villages and the main town of the resettlement area. The closing date for receipt of these tenders was set for 30 March 1962. During this period tenders were received by the Commission from building firms in many countries. A special board, headed by Sayed Mohamed Abbas Fagir, the deputy chairman of the Commission, was appointed to study these tenders: it took them a whole month, and fifty-four meetings, to finish the job. On 7 May the report of the consultant engineers was submitted to the Commission. Another board, consisting of representatives from the government technical departments and Khartoum University, was convened to study the tenders in the light of this report. This board attended twenty-eight meetings between 12 May and 17 June, during which they carefully studied all the tenders and confined their choice to a short list of four firms: Turriff Construction Sudan Ltd. (British), Techno-Export (Bulgarian), Cekop (Polish), and Philipp Holzmann (German).

At first, the general opinion was that the contract should be shared between the two best competing companies. Turriff would build the

public service premises, and the farmers' houses would be allocated to Techno-Export; but owing to an accelerated programme submitted by Turriff at a meeting held in Koblenz, Germany, on 18 April 1962, attended by Sudan Government representatives and the consultant engineers, according to which Turriff undertook to complete 1,700 farmers' houses by 30 June 1963, a further 3,500 houses by 30 June 1964 and the last 2,000 by the end of 1964, the Government decided to award the whole contract to Turriff. On 2 September another meeting was held in the Ministry of Works, attended by Turriff representatives and by members of the Commission, including Sayed Ahmed Abdalla Arbab. Sayed Arbab asked the Turriff representatives to state – assuming the contract was awarded to their firm in the next few weeks – how many farmers' houses they could complete by 30 June 1963 and by 30 June 1964. The Turriff representatives replied (according to the minutes of the meeting) that, taking into consideration the four months' delay in the award of the contract and the urgent necessity to provide the maximum number of farmers' houses as quickly as possible, they expected to be able to complete 2,000 farmers' houses by 31 July 1963 and 90 per cent of the total required by 30 June 1964. This was conditional on the farmers' houses being given priority over all other works, on there being no further delay in the award of the contract, on adequate port clearance and rail facilities being guaranteed to meet the requirements of the accelerated programme, on no penalties being imposed over and above those defined in the contract, and on the 'robconco' system being used.

On this understanding Turriff was awarded the contract on 19 September 1962. On 15 October, the day before the contract was to be signed, the Ministry of Works received from Turriff a letter with a note attached to it, both dated 12 October, in which Turriff defined their 'contractual commitment' as they saw it. It was a deviation from their original commitment which had been duly agreed. The salient differences in these two documents were noted as follows.

#### *1. The original contract*

- (a) Commencement of the contract was set for 16 October 1962.
- (b) Within fourteen months, as tendered, i.e. by 16 December 1963, 1,450 farmers' houses, plus 250 farmers' houses in occupation by the contractor would be completed.
- (c) Within twenty-six months, i.e. on 16 December 1964, 90 percent of the farmers' houses, i.e. 6,480, would be handed over.
- (d) The contract to be finally completed in thirty-two months, i.e. by 16 June 1965.

## *2. The accelerated programme*

Assuming the date for the commencement of the contract to be 16 October 1962 the position as it now stands is as follows:

- (a) From 2 September 1962 a further month's delay had occurred in commencement.
- (b) As at 31 July 1963, the contractual commitment for farmers' houses was nil, but by special measures, the contractor hoped to complete 2,000 houses less 440, i.e. 1,560 farmers' houses.
- (c) At 16 December 1963, the contractual commitment to be 1,450 farmers' houses.
- (d) As at 30 June 1964, the contractual commitment had not been laid down, but by special measures, the contractor hoped to complete 6,480 less 440, i.e. 6,040 farmers' houses.
- (e) As at 16 December 1964, the contractual commitment to be 6,480 farmers' houses completed.
- (f) The whole contract due to be completed by 16 June 1965.

The reader might have noticed the loose terminology used in this letter and in the answers of Turriff's representative at the meeting at Koblenz, such as 'expect' and 'the contractor hopes to complete', carefully chosen for their vagueness. Perhaps Turriff were trying to ensure loopholes for themselves in case of failure. This letter, however, was formulated on a different basis from the accelerated programme previously agreed upon in the Koblenz and Khartoum meetings. It was not included in the documents of the contract, which was signed at a ceremony on 16 October 1962.

The price list contracted for by Turriff contained 63 building items. The farmers' houses constituted the biggest item and the quotations given for their construction were as follows:

- (a) Two-roomed house in New Halfa town with electric connections £S 953.359.
- (b) Three-roomed house in the same town with electric connections £S 1,170.635.
- (c) Two-roomed house in the villages without electric connections £S 897.184.
- (d) Three-roomed house in the villages without electric connections £S 1,130.810.

Of the public service buildings the biggest item was of course the hospital, which was quoted at £S 257,682.352. Next came the administration buildings and schools. In general all the prices submitted by Turriff, when compared with the current cost of building in the Sudan, were reckoned to be very cheap.



On 13 December 1962, for no good reason, the government terminated its contract with Messrs. Kocks, the consulting engineers. This action came as no surprise to Kocks, who had been observing with dismay that since July the government's attitude towards them had, for some reason unknown to them, become hostile. This happened at the critical time, when the new contractor was making all the preparations for the big construction scheme and Kocks themselves were busily engaged in drawing the construction plans of all the buildings. For more than three months the government had no consultants at all, and Sayed Ahmed Abdalla Arbab spent the whole of this time in completing the work left by Kocks. On 17 January 1963 the Government had entered into a contract with a local engineering firm, the Association of Engineers Company, who were to supervise the construction works of Turriff in Khashm el Girba. This appointment brought a protest from Turriff, who said that the new consultants had no qualified engineers, and had no knowledge of the 'robconco' system that they were using.

On 22 January President Abboud attended a big ceremony in the resettlement area, and laid the foundation stone for the construction of New Halfa town and the villages. I had come to Khashm el Girba for the great occasion in the company of Salhein and Sayed Mirghani Ali Ibrahim, the chairman of Halfa Town Council. Sayed Mirghani did not forget to take with him a small quantity of loose earth which he had scooped from the inner foundations of one of the oldest mosques in Wadi Halfa, to use for the foundation stone of the resettlement area. The ceremony was attended by members of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, the minister members of the Commission, the new consultants and the representatives from Turriff. Speeches were delivered by the Commissioner for Resettlement, General Irwa, Mirghani Ali Ibrahim, Salhein, myself and Mr. Hollingshead of Turriff. Finally President Abboud gave a long address in which he reaffirmed his promises to the Wadi Halfa people, saying that the time had come for those promises to be put into practice. At the end Sayed Mirghani Ali Ibrahim produced a small cloth bag which contained the hallowed soil, and handed it to the President. It was soon mixed with water and raised on a beautiful trowel presented by Turriff to the President, and used to line the base on which the foundation stone was laid. The President then read a verse from the Koran calling on God to bestow his blessings on the new home.

After the ceremony the President made an inspection tour of the area. Torno, with their concrete buckets shuttling to and fro along cables over the dam columns, were making good progress and the dam building had risen half way to the parapet. The whole site was a scene of bustling activity and as busy as a beehive. Philipp Holzmann, the

German company, had nearly completed their excavation of the main canal, and the Irrigation Department works on the branch canals and regulators were progressing well. L'Industrie Electrique of Paris had started assembly of the transmission line towers and many of them were ready for erection on site. Finally, Sudan Railways were laying their rail sections along the line from Khashm el Girba to New Halfa town, and the station buildings, with their ramps and signal towers, had begun to emerge.

Turriff, too, were not sitting idle. Part of their machinery had arrived and their huge stone crushers were being assembled at Sasareib, on the bank of the river Atbara. They began to construct their offices and store sheds, and adjust their templates and moulds for the robconco wall slabs of the houses. Up to April, Turriff's preparations were proceeding at a satisfactory pace and it looked as though the accelerated programme would be carried out according to plan. However, at this point, certain difficulties started to creep in, which forced a general slowing down of all the machinery of the works: Turriff attributed the drawback to three main causes: the failure of Sudan Railways to fulfill their obligation to convey materials from Port Sudan in time and to give their stock priority in harbour clearance; the delay in completion of the construction plans for farmers' houses and public premises; and finally the absence of the consultant engineers, who were supposed to prepare the plans and supervise the work. Eventually, in the face of these mounting difficulties, the firm claimed that they found it impossible to go ahead with their accelerated programme, which they decided to drop, sticking to the original contract. The Minister of the Interior, having set out the target date for the emigration as October 1963 to enable the inhabitants to attend the winter rotation in their new home, was very keen to persuade Turriff to continue with their accelerated programme. A letter was therefore sent to the firm, refuting all their claims and insisting that they should stick to their obligations as specified in their accelerated submission. While this was going on, our actual listing of houses in Wadi Halfa revealed that 750 extra houses would be needed in Khashm el Girba, in addition to the quantity we had estimated previously – a number which would comprise three whole additional villages. The government at first agreed with Turriff that the new lot should be added to their programme, but in view of the difficult situation which had arisen, it was decided that their construction could be managed by local contractors.

An advertisement was accordingly published calling for alternative tenders for building farmers' houses at villages 1, 2 and 6 in red brick, crude stone or hollow concrete blocks. Very high prices were submitted by three local contractors: the lowest tender, for hollow concrete

blocks, came to more than double the figure contracted for by Turriff. To ensure quick execution the Commission came to an agreement with all three contractors: the building would be shared between them, with a minimum quota of 100 houses each, on condition that the whole contract was completed by the end of November 1963. These contractors were Sayed Ali Dongola, Sayed Hamad el Tahir el Tilib and Sayed Mohamed el Barbary and his partner Sayed Ali Salied Sabra. The intention of the government was to create another source of building besides Turriff to ensure the provision of sufficient houses to accommodate at least the first phase of emigration on the target date.

This decisive though costly action gave no incentive to Turriff, whose energies continued to sink lower and lower. By August, the situation had shown no signs of improvement and reports kept coming from different quarters to the Ministry of the Interior, pointing out the firm's unsatisfactory rate of production. On 13 August a report was submitted by the consultants to the Minister notifying him in plain terms that Turriff had failed to fulfill their commitment, as agreed at the meeting in Khartoum on 2 September 1962. On the 28 August, the Minister wrote, in a long letter to Turriff, that all the information he had received indicated that the firm had failed to carry out their obligations, and as the Sudan Government had entered into an international agreement to evacuate and safely resettle the inhabitants of Wadi Halfa before their homeland was inundated, he felt that the situation had reached a point that made it necessary for him to deal with the matter as he thought fit. He warned Turriff that unless they made some satisfactory proposal within two weeks, he would bring in other contractors and allocate part of the programme to them. On 15 October another letter to Turriff followed, announcing the expiry of the ultimatum. On 23 October 1963 Turriff replied, expressing their dissatisfaction at the steps the Minister had taken and stating their wish to withdraw, reserving the right to claim damages for all expenses incurred. When this letter produced no effect, Turriff finally withdrew towards the end of December.

It was greatly regretted that the relations with Turriff had come to such a dismal end. The preparations they had made for carrying out their contractual obligations were among the best ever seen in the area, matched only by those of Torno. Their machinery and equipment included stone crushers, ditchers, bulldozers, excavators, rollers, mixers, cranes of all sizes, trailers, moulds, templates, a fleet of tippers, lorries and landrovers, a big workshop fitted with a smithery and turning equipment and large sheds full of cement, iron bars of all sizes, doors, windows, timber beams and roofing material. All these preparations were made on site and in good time; there was no accounting for the

laggard execution of their programme. The 'robconco' method applied was also very efficient and simple, and guaranteed sound and swift construction.

There is no doubt that the 430 houses completed by Turriff were the best in the whole resettlement area, and the strength of their structure required no proof. They remained unaffected by rainstorms, and none showed any cracks or other defects.

The withdrawal of Turriff left the government no alternative but to arrange for most of the remaining 7,560 farmers' houses and public service buildings to be constructed through local contractors. There was no time left to put the contract out again to international tender. In this emergency, planning the construction became a rescue operation, in which local talent had to be exploited to the full. The advertisement, this time, was answered by some fifty local contractors, among whom the work was divided. The prices were cheaper than the first batch which had been obtained, but still far higher than Turriff's. The rate for a three-roomed house without electric connections was £S 2,320 and for a two-roomed house without electric connections £S 1,720.

These prices were £S 150 per house lower than the first prices quoted but higher than Turriff's by the staggering amount of £S 1,189 for the bigger type of house and £S 822 for the smaller type. These differentials were approximately equal to Turriff's total prices. Yet taking into account the exemption granted to Turriff from all customs duties on all imported building material, and considering the high current cost of building in the Sudan, the rates of these local contractors were not unreasonable. However, these contracts were signed with a deadline for their completion set at 30 June 1964. The hospital and other public buildings were awarded to separate contractors. The big contractors who appeared on the scene, besides the three already mentioned, were Gabir Abu el Izz, Sayed Ahmed Abu Zeid, Sayed Sadig Abu Agla and Sayed Abdalla el Sayed. The consultant engineers were happy to supervise the concrete hollow block construction, of which they had much experience. Having stepped into the shoes of a foreign firm, and with the whole country watching them, they were determined to prove their worth and meet the target date. As they knew all the local contractors, their work was thus made easier. The contractors shared the enthusiasm of the engineers, and were determined to rise to the challenge. Gathering all their materials, machinery and skilled labour, they hurried with their fleets of heavily loaded trucks to the building sites in Khashm el Girba. Soon the whole resettlement area was dotted with labour camps, and workers from all parts of the country swarmed over the village sites and the area of the main town. Concrete curing basins were dug, hollow-block machines,

both manually and electrically driven, were erected, and excavation of the foundations was begun. The road to Sasareib was worn away with the heavy trucks transporting sand and gravel. The natural concomitants of such a settlement — bush-shops, coffee houses, restaurants and bars in thatched sheds — were soon opened on temporary licences. The Post and Telegraph Department extended their lines from Khashm el Girba to the site of New Halfa. The contractors, who planned to work day and night, had equipped their camps with small generators: their searchlights and neon lamps made a strange impression by night in that desolate plain. Let us now leave Khashm el Girba welcoming its new local contractors, and return to Wadi Halfa.

## COMPENSATION AND POPULAR FEELING II

Back at Wadi Halfa, the valuation of houses was going on smoothly and without interruption throughout the area during the first and second phases of the emigration. The entire population of the northern villages had decided to emigrate to Khashm el Girba with the exception of five families, headed by influential members of the dissolved local committee, such as Mohamed Ahmed Awaad, Mohi el Din Mohamed Isa in Dibeira, Abu Ras Ayoud in Ashkeit and the family of Mohamed Ahmed Gahein in Argin South. In the town the family of Sherif Daud, and a few others in Dabarosa, followed suit. In Degheim village the situation was unique. Immediately before the compensation boards went to that village, the anti-Khashm el Girba elements had launched a vigorous campaign of both open and secret intimidation against all those in their village who supported Khashm el Girba. They booed at them when they appeared in the street and practically boycotted all their shops and small businesses in the village. Besides that, they used to insert letters under their gates, containing insults, threats and intimidation, and warning them not to choose to go to Khashm el Girba. Realising the desperate state of their opponents, the supporters of Khashm el Girba decided not to go into open conflict with them. Some relied on the effect of being patient, while other more intelligent ones resorted to deceitful tactics, convincing their opponents that they had declined Khashm el Girba, while in reality they were as determined as ever to go there. When the boards went to Degheim, a big crowd gathered where they were working trying to influence the house owners to choose cash compensation. At first they infiltrated into the houses actually being assessed and obstructed the work, making progress impossible. Some policemen whom we sent in succeeded in keeping them at bay and made the house owners feel free to declare their genuine wishes. In spite of these precautionary measures, the clever owners insisted on carrying through their delusive tricks. When the board representative entered a house for assessment, such an owner

usually joined the crowd of his opponents who were saying loudly that they chose cash compensation. After the board had finished and he was called on by name to give his choice, he would shout from amid the crowd, '*Nagdi, nagdi, ana awiz nagdi*' meaning 'Cash! cash! I want cash compensation.' This was normally greeted with shouts of joy and handclaps from the crowd. Then he would approach the board members, shouting the same slogan perhaps once or twice more to leave no doubt as to his intention, and when he stood face to face with the president of the board, he would shout the slogan louder still. The president would then enter him for cash compensation. The man would then ask in a whisper: 'What have you entered?' and when the president replied 'Cash compensation', he would say in even a lower voice: 'No, what I mean by *nagdi* is that I want a house in Khashm el Girba in compensation for this house.' The entry would then be altered to compensation in kind and signed by the owner, who on his return to the crowd would continue to shout, 'I demanded cash compensation', and more applause from the crowd would be heard. The true wishes of the many intelligent people who adopted this ruse remained concealed for a long time, during which they maintained good relations with their opponents. It was not until their departure to Khashm el Girba that the truth became known.

When the valuation of houses in Degheim village was complete, it was found that the overwhelming majority of its inhabitants were heading for Khashm el Girba. In all about 600 households had voted for cash compensation in the whole *Omodia*, mainly in Degheim South and Magarab island, with small percentages in Degheim Central and Degheim North. Angash had voted exclusively for compensation in kind, except for six families. In Gemai, Omda Hassan Aglan could enrol all his people for Khashm el Girba, leaving only a small minority who were on the side of Hassan Uthman, an influential member of the dissolved local committee, who asked for cash compensation.

By the end of July I was directed by the chairman of the Commission to join him at a meeting with the general manager of Sudan Railways to settle with him the rail facilities for our emigration programme. I collected all the relevant statistics for both passengers and cargo and left by plane for Atbara. There we had a successful meeting with Sayed Mohamed Fadl, the general manager, who completely appreciated our situation. He shared our feeling that much of the success of the evacuation would depend on the kind of accommodation made available for the passengers and the efficiency of the rail system in coping with the pace we had decided on for the emigration. Sayed Mohamed Fadl, after studying my emigration programme, decided to allocate four whole passenger trains and four freight trains to work

continuously between Wadi Halfa and Khashm el Girba, transporting the evacuees, their baggage and livestock during the emigration period. Sayed Fadl assured us that the volume of traffic would be more than sufficient for our purpose and that he would instruct the main traffic control office to give priority of passage to the emigration trains, so that their journeys to Khashm el Girba should go through without interruption. It was encouraging to be informed by Sayed Fadl that there were 200 third-class coaches with extra ventilation facilities nearing completion in the Atbara workshops, and from these he was intending to compose the passenger trains we required. To accommodate the sick and bed-ridden, Sayed Fadl agreed to recondition four dining coaches by removing the chairs and tables and putting in light beds, to suit the purpose of a mobile hospital. To ensure the efficiency of the railway station at Wadi Halfa, all the requirements for additional staff submitted to him by Sayed El Dirdiri would be granted. Thus we left Atbara with a very light heart, thanking the general manager for his co-operation.

In December 1962, Sayed Hassan Ali Abdalla, the Commission chairman, was relieved of his responsibilities with the Commission, and resumed his former duties as Under Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior. His services with the Commission and the co-operation and wise direction he gave us deserve to be recorded. Succeeding Sayed Daud Abd el Latif at a difficult time, Sayed Hassan with his wisdom, foresight and great administrative abilities, was able to accomplish great things. It was during his time that the villages and the main town were planned, and the new houses and public service buildings were designed. The Wadi Halfa Resettlement Ordinance was passed and came into force. The scope of the Commission's work was extended by the establishment of two effective branch offices at Wadi Halfa and Khashm el Girba, and three commissioners were appointed. In Wadi Halfa, the attitude of the inhabitants towards Khashm el Girba changed fundamentally. Their wild and obstinate resistance was tamed, and nearly the whole population of the area came to support the government decision. The intricate problems of compensation were solved and reasonable rates were determined. In short, his two years with the Commission had seen the emigration and resettlement change from an idea into a reality. His place was filled by Sayed Abdullahi Mohamed el Amin, who till then had been Governor Kordofan Province. With this appointment we close the events of resettlement of 1962.

In January 1963 a big exhibition was inaugurated in Wadi Halfa. The idea for it had come from Sayed Taha Uthman, the assistant chairman of the Commission. Seeing the good results of the visit by a party of



Halfa inhabitants to the experimental farm in Khashm el Girba, he suggested to me that an exhibition in Halfa town, consisting of models, samples and other items might give the inhabitants a good idea of what their resettlement area would look like. I agreed to this subtle idea and asked him to arrange it. He soon obtained approval for the necessary funds and made contact with the government departments concerned. The showroom was designed by an artist in Khartoum, and all its timber and hardboard sections were made to his specifications by a Khartoum carpenter and sent down to us in Wadi Halfa for erection. A few days later, models, posters and photographs followed. By the end of December the showroom was built in the town square, and all the models and informative material were set up. The Ministry of Irrigation had contributed a working model of Khashm el Girba dam, and another of the water system of the villages, with its filter well pumps and gravity tanks. Turriff provided large models of the two types of farmers' houses and a beautiful complete model of village No. 8, 'Argin Central'. The Ministry of Works contributed a model of their water-works in New Halfa town. The Ministry of Animal Resources sent a small herd of Kinana and Butana milking cows, which were reckoned the best species in all Africa, and a big chicken brooder, with 500 baby chickens



10. Khashm el Girba Exhibition at Wadi Halfa, with model of new house

of selected breeds, to demonstrate the poultry farming they were planning for Khashm el Girba. The Department of Forests sent various types of specimens of wood logs, in sufficient quantity to establish a complete *mawrada* (wood market) on a plot of land behind the exhibition hall. The Ministry of Agriculture arranged an excellent display of samples of vegetables, cereals, sugar cane and cotton. L'Industrie Electrique of Paris sent a giant model of their transmission line tower, and lastly the Ministry of Information participated with countless enlarged photographs, covering every aspect of activity in Khashm el Girba. I would not have believed that Taha could collect so many exhibits in such a short time until I saw them.

We took the opportunity of inviting to its inauguration representatives of all departments which were taking some part in the construction of the resettlement area. It was planned at first that the exhibition would be opened by General Irwa, the Minister of the Interior, but owing to unforeseen urgent business, he could not come and sent Brigadier Mohamed el Mahdi Hamid, Military Governor of Northern Province, to deputise for him. All the representatives accepted our invitation and came by special plane from Khartoum, except for the new chairman of the Commission Sayed Adbullahi Mohamed el Amin, who had suffered a stroke and was sick in bed. The ceremony took place in the morning in the town square, attended by a crowd of 10,000. Speeches were given by the Military Governor, Mirghani Ali Ibrahim, Salhein and myself, all surveying the different aspects of the creation of the new home, and the social and economic revolution planned for the inhabitants of Wadi Halfa. The occasion ended with sports, in which all the sports clubs, except that of Degheim village, took part.

Soon after the opening, the exhibition was crowded with local visitors who were admitted to the showroom in successive batches. We arranged that men and women should visit the exhibition on alternate days, and on the first two days there were 6,000 male and 4,000 female visitors. Every visitor wanted to know about everything in the exhibition. On the second day many women came from Faras and Batn el Hajar and had a look. They were very pleased, but I gathered from their husbands that whereas most of the women in the villages wanted to come to the exhibition, many were hampered by lack of transport. Accordingly I allocated a number of cars, which enabled hundreds of them, specially from the Saras-Akasha reach, to come and see the small model of their promised land. The Turriff models and the exhibits of the Ministry of Agriculture aroused special curiosity. On the first ladies' day an interesting conversation occurred in the vegetable section, which revealed the prejudice with which the anti-Khashm el Girba people

viewed anything related to the resettlement. It happened that the green pepper exhibits were exceptionally large and good, and very suitable for stuffing with a mixture of minced meat and boiled rice, then baked with butter, as ladies would usually like to cook them. A pro-Khashm el Girba lady who was attracted by them exclaimed, 'How big and nice they are!', and the immediate reply of an anti-Khashm el Girba girl was, 'To fill one of these, you would need a whole kilo of rice, we haven't got that much!'

On 9 February, at the request of the Commission, I submitted my suggestions for the disposal of the salvage materials of all dwelling houses, government buildings and date trees. I had found that the Nubians used very little joinery in relation to the number of houses, but a large amount of steel rail sections was used in roofing, especially in the Saras-Akasha reach. The wooden joinery of office buildings and officials' houses, though most of it was old and worm-eaten, might be useful, as well as the large number of rail sections used in nearly all office roofing. The Nile Hotel and the Sudan Railway buildings, including the train sheds and workshops, would be stripped by their own department, or dismantled and sent to Atbara. But in most cases the expenditure involved in the salvage of these materials and the cost of transport to a place where they might be of some use would nearly equal, if not exceed, their prices when new. The very short time that would elapse between the evacuation of the buildings and their immersion by the flood should also be considered: we would have our hands full at the time of emigration, and it was highly undesirable to add to our headaches. As for date trees, there was no intent or purpose which their salvage would serve; apart from the good shoots which the Ministry of Agriculture could separate, transport and transplant elsewhere in the Northern Province, all the date trees without exception should be left untouched and go to the abyss. Finally I recommended that all building salvage should be put up for tender, on condition that the successful contractor should make his own arrangements for demolition and transportation. This suggestion was accepted, and Mohamed Uthman Abd el Rahim and his partner, Akasha Salhein, were awarded the concession for £S 13,000. The speedy rise of the Nile water, particularly in the town, made it difficult for them to collect their spoils, but on the whole it turned out to be a profitable undertaking. They stored their material in a large depot near the airport, and sent most of it in lots to the resettlement area, where it was re-used in house extensions.

On 13 February General Irwa, the Minister of the Interior, in a long broadcast on Radio Omdurman, declared the rates of compensation approved by the Council of Ministers. The same rates were adopted as

had been recommended by our committees, and the difference in the cost of houses was presented as a gift by the Government to the inhabitants, to fulfill the promises of President Abboud and prove his goodwill towards the inhabitants. The declaration met with general approval, and the generous gift of President Abboud put an end to the rumours that the high difference in the cost of housing would be collected from the inhabitants; it also appeared to place the inhabitants who were going to Khashm el Girba in a privileged position compared to those who preferred to receive cash compensation for their houses. In fact, it really shook the ranks of the anti-Khashm el Girba people, many of whom submitted appeals for reconsideration of their choice, on the grounds that they had been misled by their fellow-citizens. These appeals, however, were dismissed by the Commissioner for Compensation, on the pretext that everybody had been clearly warned before giving his choice that his decision would be final.

As soon as the rates for compensation were declared, the natural questions that followed were how and when they would be paid; Nubian opinion was at variance on both questions. The poor laymen, with their inordinate desire for money, wanted all their cash compensation paid immediately, in a single payment. Others, who were wiser and aware of the undesirable effects of this suggestion, favoured instalment payments. A week after the announcement of the compensation rates, four moderate Nubians came to my office and in a long and fruitful discussion requested me to advise the government that payment of cash compensation should be done by instalments and that it should in no case be allowed to be paid in one lot. They quoted as a precedent what had happened to their Kunuz relatives in lower Nubia, who had received all the cash compensation for their property lost because of the second heightening of Aswan Dam in 1932 in a lump sum, and quickly spent it all, with the dire consequence that they became poorer than before. They suggested that the first instalment, not exceeding a third of the total entitlement, should be paid to the inhabitants before they left for Khashm el Girba, to enable them to settle their debts and allow a reasonable sum for meeting their immediate domestic needs on arrival at their new home. As to the remainder of the cash, they informed me that they were considering plans for communal investment, in which the rest of the payment could be utilized. These suggestions tallied with my own ideas, and I further discussed with them the possibility of initiating the agricultural syndicate which I had proposed to the Commission, or the creation of a Nubian Bank in the resettlement area. They said that these suggestions were in line with their own thinking and promised to consider and sponsor them. These men were Ali Ahmed Ali, advocate Mohi el Din Mohamed Nur, Ali el



11. Compensation payment being made at Faras. Author, in uniform, centre

Tahir and the late Uthman Mahmoud. In a long report to the commission, I set out these sagacious ideas together with my former suggestion that all compensation payments should be made through a commercial bank. Those not wishing to emigrate to Khashm el Girba were of course recommended for a lump sum payment, so that they should be in position to arrange for their settlement in the places they chose. The Commission agreed to these suggestions in general and decided to pay only one-third of the total cash entitlement in Wadi Halfa, deferring the rest for payment in the resettlement area. The Ministry of Finance, for technical reasons, turned down my proposal for payment through a bank.

In March Sayed Abdullahi Mohamed el Amin retired on grounds of ill-health, and Sayed Allam Hassan Allam, Governor Northern Province, was appointed chairman of the Commission. While I regretted the ill-health and retirement of Sayed Abdullahi, the appointment of Sayed Allam was welcome news to me. We had served together in Northern Province, and being Governor, he was well acquainted with the situation in this region of his province. Moreover he was an industrious man, with humane qualities that won him the devotion of all his assistants. His past experience as Assistant District Commissioner, Wadi Halfa, gave him a good grasp of the problems through which we were wading.

When the assessment boards had finished with all the residential

buildings in the first and second phase areas, our attention was directed to the valuation of the market in Wadi Halfa and the possibility of building shops in Khashm el Girba before the arrival of the inhabitants. All shop buildings were therefore assessed by the boards and put down for cash compensation. When we started to register the commercial land for compensation in kind, new directions came from the Commission, upsetting all the rules laid down by the technical committee on commercial land compensation in their meeting in Khartoum. The new policy was aimed at the reduction of freehold commercial land in New Halfa by giving owners of multiple freehold shops the larger portion of their land compensation in cash. The new formula would secure nearly one-third of the plots registered. It granted one shop for each of those who owned up to three, two for those who had four or five, and three for those with six to eight shops, and so on. The reader may observe that this formula did not follow mathematical rules or any laws of progression, and its effect on the owners who were enjoying their rents was injurious. The family of Sherif Daud, who owned more than 100 shops, were hard hit, and they sought justice by submitting an appeal to the Attorney-General. He decided in their favour and they were granted a number equal to their plots in New Halfa market. The distribution of the new shop plots against the plan of the new market was determined by lot, as agreed with all shop owners.

We further recommended that all licensed traders who had carried on commercial business in rented shops continuously for the preceding five years should be given the privilege of buying shop plots in New Halfa market in closed auction. This suggestion was approved by the Commission, and Sayed Uthman Hussein on a visit to Wadi Halfa conducted the auction. As the number of plots was the same as the number of applicants, no bids were made, and the new sites were disposed of at the original premium rate. This done, we urged all plot owners to hurry and build their shops before the emigration started. They complied with our request, and within a few days agreed to a good standard plan and gave the building concession to their own fellow-contractors, who collected their building equipment, left for Khashm el Girba and started construction.

Another problem which needed to be tackled was the distribution of the existing villages in Wadi Halfa to the twenty-six village sites in the resettlement area. This was not as easy as it looked. In the affected area, all the villages were sited in strips along the two banks of the Nile, each strip being about 100 miles long. In the resettlement scheme, the area was broad and square, and the villages formed three parallel lines in the overall layout. Moreover, the new villages were more numerous than their existing counterparts, and were planned to have equal numbers of

houses, while in the affected area the size of villages varied from big settlements like Degheim, Dibeira and Argin to small hamlets like Sheikh Ali and Sahaba. To accommodate the inhabitants in their new settlement, some (large) villages had to be split up, others (small) had to be grouped together in one new village, while in some cases a whole group of inhabitants of one village was able to stay together.

I invited representatives from all the villages, showed them the map of the resettlement area and explained all the difficult sides of this tricky question. We took the first step by inverting the geographical order of the existing villages in relation to their locations in the resettlement area. Since the entry to the resettlement area was at the south end, the meeting decided to allocate Faras the village site closest to the entry, and so on northwards, aiming at preserving the existing relationships of one village to another as closely as possible. Fortunately we found out that the number of houses in the two existing Faras villages exactly coincided with the numbers in their new counterparts, so we allotted village No. 1 to Faras East and its neighbour No. 33 to Faras West. In the two Sarra villages we found surplus houses, which we allotted to Dibeira North 'Hajir' and Argin North, their nearest neighbours. Dibeira, Argin and Degheim were each split into three villages. This system worked smoothly except for a disturbance which occurred in one 'cocktail' village, No. 14, which was named 'Buhen', after the ancient city of that name. This village was composed of surplus households from Dibeira, Ashkeit and Hasa villages. The inhabitants protested at first at being segregated from their original villages, but when they realised that their new village was the nearest to New Halfa town, they accepted. All the main villages carried on their original names, and split villages hived off from their mother-villages were given the names by which the inhabitants called them when they were sub-villages: thus the two new villages of Argin were called Sharkutari and Ashawiriki. In Dibeira, Hajir – which was the name of Dibeira North – was preserved for its inhabitants. The inhabitants of the unnamed village of the Kunuz, near the remains of Buhen, together with their relatives in Angash and Degheim, were grouped together in a quarter of the new main town where there were surplus houses. Sahaba and Sheikh Ali were amalgamated in one village called Sheikh Ali.

In the town the situation was straightforward. All the quarters were easily allocated, and their identity and sense of neighbourhood were preserved. The large number of surplus houses, all grouped in one quarter, offered a good opportunity to villages wishing to change their mode of life from rural to urban, but on the whole there were not many of them, and the applications received were equal to the number



of houses offered. A few notable rural families, such as the family of Salhein and Suliman el Saigh of Ashkeit, decided to move to the town.

After we finished with this complicated problem, I sent a long list of the names of the villages to the Commission, with a copy to the Commissioner for Resettlement, asking that the new names should be substituted for the consecutive numbers given on the map, and that these names should be used by the officials, contractors and workers in Khashm el Girba. Unfortunately everybody in Khashm el Girba had become so accustomed to the numbers that the new names had no impact at all. Even worse, when the Nubians arrived and lived in these villages, the well-established numbers could not be dislodged and replaced by the original names. During my first visit to the area, when I had just been appointed Governor, Kassala Province, I was really unhappy to find signposts at the entry of each village bearing its number instead of its name, and that the Nubians themselves were in the habit of referring to their villages by their numbers. 'Where are the original names of your villages?' I asked, and one of them replied that the local people of Khashm el Girba never knew them. 'You have to teach them that you are living in social settlements, with names, and not in military camps,' I said. In my first meeting with the local council I suggested that all signs showing village numbers should be replaced by bigger ones with the village names, and that the council should pass a local order to the effect that any petition or official document referring to any village by its number should be disregarded.

In April the Council of Ministers had appointed a ministerial committee with wide executive powers to supervise and decide upon any matter relating to the emigration and resettlement of the people of Wadi Halfa, without reference to the Council of Ministers. This arrangement was dictated by the urgent and critical circumstances which had arisen in consequence of the unexpected delay in the construction of the farmers' houses by Messrs. Turriff. The situation had become so sensitive that any further procrastination would have very serious results, especially in Wadi Halfa, with the crisis getting nearer every day. Some effort had to be made to ensure that accommodation was provided for the inhabitants, before the disappearance of their existing dwellings. The creation of this high-level body over the Commission had completely eclipsed the administrative committee, which had previously advised the Minister of the Interior on all issues within its frame of reference. It broke through the bureaucratic network and ensured that matters went straight to the Upper Committee while they were 'hot' and were discussed and decided on the spot. The chairman of this committee was the Minister of the Interior, General Mohamed Ahmed Irwa, and the members were the



Minister of Agriculture, General Mohamed Rida Farid; the Minister of Works, Sayed Ziada Uthman Arbab; the Minister of Irrigation, Sayed Mekki el Manna; and the Minister of Communication, Sayed Mohamed Hussein Suliman. The last-named was a Nubian from Ashkeit, and his appointment was considered a conciliatory gesture to the people of Wadi Halfa for the deeply-felt loss of Dr. Mohamed Ahmed Ali, the former Minister of Health, who died of a heart attack early in 1961. The first meeting of this committee was held on 13 April 1963, and it found itself face to face with the vexed question of Turriff's failure to fulfil their contractual commitments.

Late in July, rumours had started to take serious shape in Wadi Halfa that the construction of the farmers' houses was lagging behind and that the local contractors could not meet their deadline. This would mean, at the very least, that our September programme had to be postponed to a later date which nobody could predict. Sayed Uthman Hussein confirmed the rumour, causing me no little worry. My immediate reaction was that our September schedule for the emigration was absolutely out of the question, and that a postponement was essential. I therefore decided to go to Khashm el Girba to assess the situation, and the effect of the contractors' delays on our emigration time-table. Salhein had shown an interest in accompanying me, and so we both left for Khashm el Girba at the end of the first week in August. It was raining and the roads were muddy when we arrived, and we could appreciate all too easily the difficulty of road transport at that season of the year. The temperature was moderate, and the rainfall had clothed the whole of the Butana plain with a green blanket of growing grass, softening its usually harsh and merciless landscape.

We paid a visit to the Dam site and found Torno working with their characteristic energy. The Dam had risen nearly to parapet level, and the water had already been released into the main canal, where it rushed through with a tumultuous uproar. On our way to the resettlement area, the view was dominated by the high banks of the main canal, the electricity pylons and the railway line, parallel to our road, carrying life and energy to this dead region which had never seen life except for the scattered Shukria camel herds which grazed here at this time of the year. Where it had rained heavily the night before, our cart could only push through the mud with great difficulty, skidding right and left on the slippery road and nearly sticking fast, when we noticed a sudden change in the landscape. The two hills of El Meigil, or 'Sarrah' as it came to be called, were clearly to be seen to the left and right. In the middle of the space between them, the white buildings of the villages broke the even line of the horizon. The height and breadth of their half-finished houses were so exaggerated by the refraction of

the sun's rays that the whole area, viewed from that spot, gave us the impression of the spreading ruins of an ancient civilisation. After wallowing for a further 5 km. through the wet road, we came to a big regulator built across the road. Turning right, we followed a road along the left bank of the branch canal to Turriff's village No. 1, located at the foot of El Meigil hill. There we got out and visited nearly every house on foot. Salhein made a thorough inspection, looking at floors and ceilings, testing the strength of the walls by beating them with his fist, swinging the doors and windows and testing their locks and bolts, and entering every room. He seemed satisfied.

Then we moved to the section of the village under construction, and found Turriff cranes lifting the concrete wall sheets for erection. I was listening attentively to a Turriff engineer who explained to me the method of construction, when I noticed that Salhein was completely absorbed in examining a bucket, lifting up loose soil excavated at a considerable depth from a seepage pit dug for a water closet. When the bucket came up with its load of silt, Salhein went straight to it, scooped out a handful of soil, and after looking closely at it and rubbing it in his hand remarked loudly: 'There isn't a pebble in it.' He realised that the soil layer was not as shallow as his nephew Mohi el Din had presumed. At Village No. 2 we found a few houses completed, and the rest lying folded in sheets on their foundation platforms, waiting for erection. In Village No. 6 Turriff's masons were laying the 'robconco' in the farmers' houses.

Although the standard of Turriff's structure pleased us, yet we were dismayed at their slow rate of production. We then went on to the three villages which were in the hands of the local contractors. In Village 33 the foremen, masons and workers of Ali Dongola were busy on a variety of tasks but despite their obvious energy, Ali Dongola was still behind schedule. Most of the houses were either half-constructed or at foundation level and we left his village with the conviction that he could not, in any circumstance, complete his contract by September. The villages on which his two colleagues were working gave us the same impression. We returned to Khashm el Girba, spending the night in the rest house with our kind host, Sayed Uthman Hussein. Early the next day we left the area with heavy hearts.

On my way back, I stopped off in Khartoum for a couple of days and got to know from Sayed Allam that the unexpected delay of the completion of houses had obliged the ministerial committee to put off the date of emigration from September to November. I left for Wadi Halfa with no alternative but to adapt my emigration programme to the new circumstances.

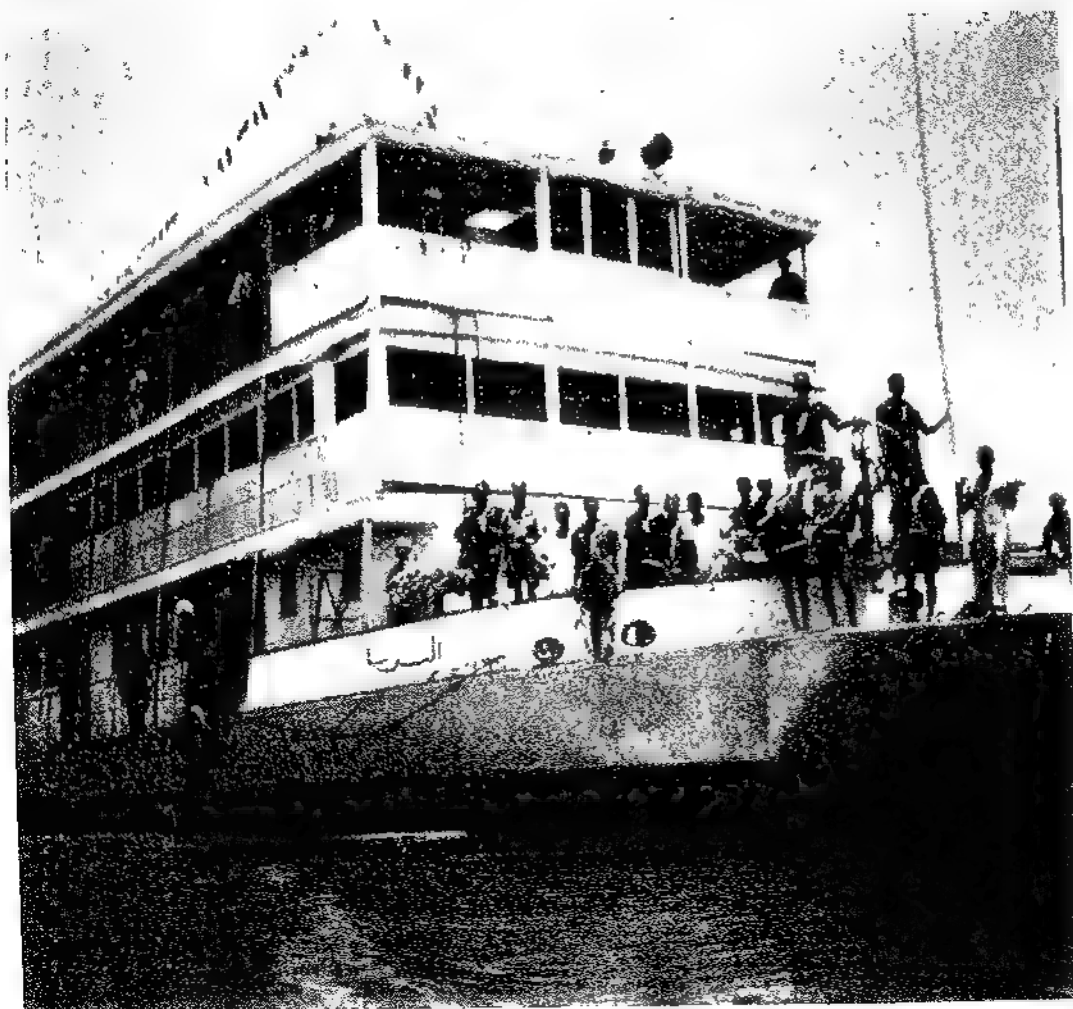
## THE HISTORIC JOURNEY OF *EL THORAYA* OVER THE CATARACTS

On 15 August 1963 the steamer *El Thoraya* departed from the main quay of Wadi Halfa harbour on its most hazardous and adventurous trip south across the formidable cataracts to Khartoum. The purpose of this unprecedented trip in the history of navigation in the Sudan was to conquer the dread which these natural barriers inspired for vessels of *El Thoraya's* size, and to explore the practical possibilities for the emigration of our fleet.

I have already described how successful attempts were made in the nineteenth century by Ismail Pasha, the son of Mohamed Ali Pasha of Egypt, in 1820, then by General Wolseley, the commander of the relief expedition in 1884, and finally by General Kitchener in 1898, at the start of the reconquest of the Sudan. Without prejudice to their dangerous achievements, the boats they used were far smaller than *El Thoraya*, hence the high risk of its important journey.

Ever since the conclusion of the Nile Agreement, the evacuation of our river fleet had been a thorny problem at the headquarters of the Steamers Department. Should the vessels be dismantled and transported in sections by rail to Khartoum North dockyard for reassembly, or should they sail upstream to Khartoum, braving the perils of the hideous cataracts? The first suggestion would involve an expenditure of nearly £S 0.5 million, while the second operation was a great gamble, risking the loss of both steamers and crew. In 1962 the whole issue was passed to Sayed Ibrahim Medani, an energetic and courageous engineer who was in charge of the Halfa-Kerma region, for study and a report.

To assess the dangers of floating our flotilla all the way upstream to Khartoum, Ibrahim Medani decided to take a reconnaissance trip with a small but powerful launch, up the Nile across the three most formidable cataracts to Kerma. He collected all the historical accounts of past adventures, and compiled his notes carefully on the plans laid down by his predecessors, the passages they followed and the methods they used in hauling their vessels through the hideous gorges against lashing



12. The river steamer *El Thoraya* before departure

currents, until they came to clear water. Ibrahim once said to me: 'I used to read them for pleasure, not knowing that fate had reserved one of these adventures for me.' With the help of the map of the Second Cataract and the aid of an excellent aerial photograph taken by the Department of Archaeology, Ibrahim Medani drew the line of his passage across the Second Cataract. With all this background knowledge, and equipped with his maps, diary, binoculars, and baggage, he boarded the 30-foot launch *Ghattas* and, accompanied by two pilots and six sailors, left Wadi Halfa in September 1962. They were followed by two Land-rovers driven at the same pace along the east bank of the Nile with their camp equipment and provisions.

The following account of this historic adventure is based on what its hero, Ibrahim Medani, related to me.

They sailed for half an hour on quiet water, passing by the southern part of Halfa town, the date forest of the village of Degheim and the

remains of the ancient city of Buhen, until they arrived at the downstream end of the Second Cataract. The rocky islands of Kokki stretched far to the horizon, blocking the river's course from Abu Sir rock on the west to the village of Abka on the east. The first spate of Nile flood filled the narrow channels surrounding these islands, rushing through at a crazy speed, causing whirlpools and circling foam, and a mist of spray.

They pursued their difficult passage carefully from one channel to another between cliffs and among the pointed rocks that blocked their way. Slowly and diligently their tiny vessel nosed its way against the dashing current. When they got to the middle of the cataract the islands became wider and their rocks higher and even more rugged, with no signs of life except for a few herons which flew over that desolate volcanic landscape searching for dead fish. Then the current became wilder and the uproar so loud that it drowned the noise of the engine. Still they pushed on, and after an hour the stream was lashing them violently and the uproar was like thunder, its echo reflected by the mountainous islands. They looked south and found themselves within a short distance of El Bab el Kabir, 'the great gate', the most hazardous point in the whole cataract. Here an avalanche of water rushed down a steep slope of only seventy yards, its level dropping ten feet. The waves clashed with each other. At the 'gate' itself, a yawning gulf 35 feet wide, the water dropped five feet in one leap. Their tiny vessel would definitely have been swallowed up by the furious whirlpools if they had attempted an ascent, so they made a side manoeuvre eastwards in search of a safer passage, passing through whipping currents which tossed their launch like a cork from cleft to cleft. Here they found a safer passage, wide enough for the launch but too narrow for the big steamers, but the current in this gorge was too strong for their engine to overcome. Cables were then extended to the east bank, and with the help of the crowd of men gathered on the foreshore, who had been watching with deep concern, and with the engine running at full power, the launch was towed to clear water. Thus they managed to surmount the Second Cataract through that narrow corridor, evading El Bab el Kebir, and the Kabank, Gargan and Sarhan rapids to the west. They moored the launch in quiet water on the east bank and had a period of rest during which Ibrahim recorded his observations in his diary and marked an alternative passage on the map for blasting when the river was low.

The courageous party then resumed their trip south. They sailed the next seventy miles in quiet water and were so satisfied with their success that they had begun to feel that their greatest worry was over, when they reached the downstream section of the Third Cataract at

Semna, and realised they had been mistaken. Early in the morning, Ibrahim was woken up by a tremendous uproar, like the sound of aero engines. He heard one of the *reises* (pilots) commenting 'The cataract is about to uproot its boulders'. Steering to the west, they managed to cross through a broad yet difficult strait, and came to clear water again. After a further twenty miles, the party found themselves facing the most formidable part of the cataract, Umbakol. Its ugly black boulders, half sunk in the rough water, were scattered across the river; they seemed haunted by the spirits of their victims who had died in wrecks long ago. The launch made its way through those ghostly islands and headed for Tanjur, that terrible barrier which had engulfed the steamer *Ghizeh* opposite the village of Mak el Nasir in 1896. Her remains were still to be seen. This section of the cataract consisted of volcanic peaks lying partly under the surface, while the tips of others projected above the water, forming bare and craggy islands. The invisible rocks below the surface caused the water to break and swirl to left and right with terrifying force, making showers of spray and a deafening roar. In the midst of this, they were at a loss to know what to do. Any attempt to retreat would mean that their quivering launch would be swept by the current against a boulder and smashed to pieces; while any advance meant a deadly struggle against the oncoming current, which was too swift for the power of their engines. 'Life had never been sweeter to me than at those moments', said Ibrahim. 'The picture of my children came clearly into my mind's eye, and for them I gained courage and determination to conquer the danger'. He looked at his eight companions and found them stunned, with no movement except of their eyes. They too were evidently haunted by the thought of their families. Suddenly the harsh voice of Reis Mohamed called out: 'And now what?' Ibrahim, gathering his courage and wisdom, shouted to his men that there was no way except forward, and that they must try to get out of that horrible place at any cost. In a moment the engine was set to its maximum power and, the skilful Mohamed holding the wheel with a strong grip, the launch started to shudder, apparently without movement, as though it were moored to a post. Yet the launch persisted and made a course forward at a speed too negligible to be noticed — it took an hour and a half to cover the 20 metres' length of that terrible place. The party were greatly relieved to leave Tanjur behind and sail south to the village of Akasha. Their course was still marked by rapids, and at some places the river was narrow and the current correspondingly strong.

On their arrival at Akasha village, the crew hurried to the tomb of Sidi Akasha, performed a thanksgiving prayer and begged the blessing of that saint for a safe journey to Karma and a happy return to their

families. They spent two days in that village, during which they calmed their fears and steadied their nerves. Ibrahim Medani also had time to record his impressions. The third day, the party collected their camp equipment, loaded it on the two Land-rovers and went down to their launch. They resumed their trip south for a few miles to Dal cataract, the last link of the Third Cataract. The river was broad but its course was interrupted by a series of rapids and small craggy hillocks. The water surface throughout the approaches was broken by rough currents and towering waves. The party had a difficult time here, with their launch lurching up and down on the hilly waves. At one moment it was lifted so high that it seemed the launch was airborne, then it sank down into a deep trough between the rising waves, and they could see nothing but a wall of water. The upstream currents were thundering towards them, roaring stopping their progress and making it impossible to control the launch. Fear had already gripped them, and they lost all hope of overcoming their difficulties. Eventually they decided to go to the west bank. On their way to land, they halted at a small island inhabited by one family. The children, seeing a mechanical vessel for the first time in their lives, hurried to the house to tell their parents the exciting news. After a while an old man came out of that lonely dwelling and welcomed them, and they told him of their difficulty. Arming himself with a cork log, not more than a metre long, he came on board, and with his knowledge and long experience of the cataract, guided them on safely. At the head of the cataract he asked them to stop and, with the help of his cork log, swam safely on clear water to his island.

South of Dal navigation was easy. The party was cheered by the inhabitants of the villages of both banks, who gathered under the shade of the palm trees, shouting and waving to them. With raised morale they hastened on to the scene of their last adventure, the Fourth Cataract. After some hours, they came to a narrower section of the river, with shallow rapids and beating waves. The straggling mud buildings of Ordwan village were visible at the foot of a rocky hill: this marked the approach to the Fourth Cataract. Slowly and cautiously they entered the ingress channel at the tail of the cataract. The middle of the cataract was blocked with massive ridges of quartz and basalt reefs. The Nile here was turbulent and angry; but their courage and experience enabled the party to overcome the difficulties in their way. As Ibrahim said, 'with the help of God Almighty we arrived safely at our destination — Karma.'

On their return to Wadi Halfa, Ibrahim waited for some time for the Nile to subside. In November he visited the Second Cataract where he examined its channels at low river; and with the help of the map he



13. Engineer Ibrahim Medani pointing out his proposed route across the Cataract to the Dock Manager

drew his proposed traverse line for the emigration of our fleet. His scheme took a different passage from that of *Ghattas*. Instead he found a better course through the channels of Mashatawa, at the tail of the Second Cataract, and Karmoni, through which Ismail Pasha hauled his *giyasa*, then Korbag Doli and finally El Bab el Kabir, instead of Orognoff, through which the villagers had pulled their launch. At Semna his line crossed the cataract at Dafatog and another narrow channel near the west bank, and at Tanjur a channel by the east bank was selected. All these channels were deep enough during flood time to float the steamers, but they needed a strenuous effort to blast away rock from the wall of the channels, to make them wide enough for the steamers to pass through. He marked all these narrow places with lime wash, for blasting in the winter. Engineer Abd el Razag of Karima made a similar reconnaissance at the Fourth Cataract at low river and marked a few places at a passage called Khor el Utaash.

After this partial survey, Ibrahim compiled a comprehensive report for the Department of Steamers, saying that it was feasible to float our fleet upstream to Khartoum, subject to completion of the rock blasting along the course of navigation before the flood of 1963. He requested that sufficient dynamite should be ordered from the Geological



Department, and that experts should be sent to start work on the boulders at the beginning of the winter.

The Department of Steamers, after careful study of this report, gave the necessary approval, and early that winter a team of skilled workers from the Geological Department came to Wadi Halfa with their drilling equipment and a good supply of dynamite capsules. They were taken by Ibrahim Medani straight to the Second Cataract, pitching their camp at Abka village. It took them several days to blow up the bottlenecks at the passage of Mashatawa, and they then proceeded to the Karmoni channel and started again. I visited them one day and found Ibrahim wearing his steel helmet, supervising the execution of his historic plan. He showed me the holes for injecting dynamite which had been driven by Ismail Pasha to widen the Karmoni passage for his boats in 1820. At El Bab el Kabir, Semna and Tanjur, Ibrahim took great care not to smash more rocks than necessary, for fear of upsetting the water levels lower down the Nile and causing scarcity of water for the *sagiyas* there. Meanwhile the engineer Abd el Razag with a small team managed to hack the projecting rocks of the Fifth Cataract, and of Khor el Utaash in particular. By February the passage to Khartoum was cleared, and Ibrahim planned his second and most difficult adventure of steaming *El Thoraya* all the way upstream to Khartoum with the first flush of the Nile flood, in August 1963.

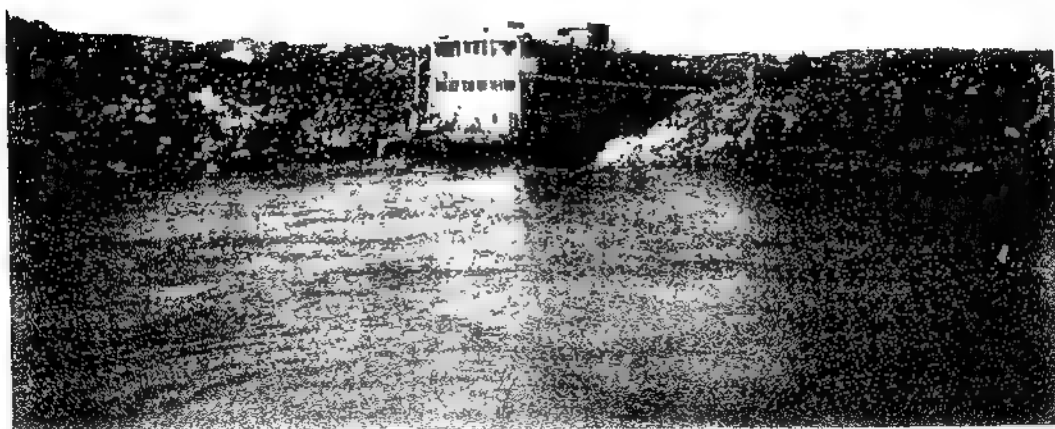
In mid-May the *El Thoraya* entered the capacious dock of Wadi Halfa. There she was carefully inspected and a detailed plan was made for her maintenance to prepare for the coming adventure. No risks were possible, and it was decided to put her in the best possible condition to face her ordeal. A big team of the most skilful and energetic artisans and mechanics was allocated for the job, and they worked in relays, day and night, either in the dock or in the workshop. I lived for six years next to Wadi Halfa docks and never saw such ceaseless activity. They realised that a dangerous test awaited their vessel and worked with a will. The steamer was in dock for three whole months, during which no nail was left untouched. By the first of August the vessel was fully reconditioned, and its reserve fuel tanks were full.

The first spate of the Nile flood had already reached Wadi Halfa by then and Ibrahim Medani made his last overland inspection visit to Mashatawa and Karmoni on 14 August. He found them full of swirling water. Early the next morning, a final inspection was made of the vessel, and the dock workers started to decorate her with festoons of flowers, palm branches and coloured flags.

In the afternoon, the beautiful *El Thoraya* steamed slowly from the docks to the main quay of Wadi Halfa harbour, towing two barges and intermittently sounding her siren. People rushed to the river bank and

harbour from their houses and the market area to bid her a safe journey and by the time she reached the quay, there were already more than 3,000 people at the harbour. They all waved and the crew lined the deck. The inhabitants looked sad; to them the journey of *El Thoraya* was the beginning of the mass exodus from their beloved home. I could see that Ibrahim and the crew, though aware of the hazards that awaited them, looked confident and resolute as they waved to the crowd. At 5 p.m., after a long hoot, she set off slowly upstream.

It was the first time in her history that *El Thoraya* steamed south of Wadi Halfa. She spent the night at the tail of the Second Cataract, south of Magarab Island. Early the next morning she sailed to the ingress of Mashatawa passage. The barges were deployed at a small bay near the entrance and the steamer headed into that difficult channel alone. She went ahead for a while, but the violent current at a sharp bend stopped her dead. Hawsers were then tied to the rock walls of the channel, and as the winch handles were turned, and with the full power of the engine, the vessel had slowly and laboriously started to move, when suddenly one of the cables snapped. Lashing back like a steel whip, it gave a mortal blow to one of the sailors, Mohamed Ginawi, who died instantly, and slightly wounded another. This sad accident on the first day of the trip was taken as a bad omen, but fortunately it was the first and last accident during the whole of the fleet's evacuation. However, it delayed *El Thoraya* for some hours, while the body of Ginawi was taken to the town for burial and the wounded sailor was sent to hospital. By noon the operation commenced. Ibrahim, finding his vessel in difficult straits, resorted to



14. *El Thoraya* in the Second Cataract

the method applied by his predecessors in the nineteenth century. He planned a big hauling operation. Cables were fastened to all parts of the deck and tied to ridges on the banks. Each cable was pulled by a team of strong sailors and with the engine screaming and pushing at full power the 250-ton vessel started to crawl through the gorge. It took them days of persistent effort to bring the vessel out of Mashatawa. At Karmoni the channel was wide, but the current was violent and the slope very steep, making it difficult for the crew to tow the 145-feet-long and 30-feet-wide *El Thoraya* with its heavy weight. The same type of hauling operation was used and the crew, pulling and towing all day, sometimes to late hours at night and for nearly a week on end, got it to the upstream end of Karmoni. I paid them a visit there and saw the current gushing steeply down, so that the vessel seemed to be climbing a waterfall. I felt pessimistic and thought that a day would never come when I would hear that our fine vessel had safely entered the dockyard at Khartoum North. However, the courage and confidence of Ibrahim allayed my fears somewhat, and when the crew had accomplished their dangerous task at Karmoni, I realised that his optimism was well-founded. The two barges were hauled over bodily without difficulty, their structure being narrow and light. Passing Ukwanda and Glutendi, branches of the Second Cataract, the party found itself at the foot of El Bab el Kebir. Ibrahim told me that when he saw it first, on his trip with the *Ghattas*, it was only 10 metres wide, with a drop of 8 metres, so that it was a formidable waterfall. He had wondered how Ismail Pasha and Kitchener had managed to bring their vessels over it; he could find no answer, despite the evidence of history that they had actually done it. The previous winter, Ibrahim's party had smashed it to a width of 13.5 metres at the southern head, and at another place to 16.5 metres and at a third place to 20 metres. Spread over this width, the water had dropped and the current become less violent — hence, with an effort like that made at Karmoni, El Bab el Kebir was crossed. It took the party fifteen days of continuous effort to cross the Second Cataract. The muscles of the sailors had swelled to the size of polo balls. When the two barges had been safely pulled through and docked to *El Thoraya*, she sailed to the east bank, and moored there for the night. The crew hurried to the tomb of Abu Hawa, imploring the blessings of that saint and praying to God that they should not be faced with another hazard like that of the Second Cataract.

Leaving the Second Cataract behind, the vessel continued south through clear water between two desolate banks of harsh craggy slate and volcanic hills, with no trace of life or any trees. They had a comfortable trip along that deserted stretch of the Nile, until they heard the roar of Semna cataract, hours before they reached its approaches.

When they entered the passage, the engine was too weak to push the vessel through. They extended the cables and used the manual winch, but in the middle of the gorge the lashing current struck the boat on one side, causing it to lean over at a critical angle. Ibrahim said that they all gave up hope and thought *El Thoraya* had actually capsized. But the courage of the sailors and the unfailing wisdom of the *reis* saved it. The vessel sailed on up the rapids of Semna at a speed of 2 km. an hour, zigzagging through the slate and basalt ridges, until she arrived at Umbakol. The current was fierce and the vessel could not advance against it head on. She therefore kept manoeuvring and shunting from one side to the other. The high waves would slap her at the bow, forcing her down at the stern and then lifting her high. The crew read aloud verses from the Koran, begging God for mercy. They continued in this grave situation for hours, but at last the vessel reached clear water without assistance. After the crew had calmed down after the ordeal, one of the sailors asked Ibrahim about the difficult places that still lay ahead. Ibrahim gave the names of seventeen more barriers. Another sailor said: 'Tell us there are even more!' It seemed that their troubles would have no end.

After Umbakol, *El Thoraya* entered deep waters, with volcanic islands and bottlenecks. Her progress was slow as she staggered from cleft to cleft. At times she could not proceed at all except by manoeuvring and shunting, and her speed dropped to 0.5 km. per hour. They proceeded at this rate, passing by the remains of El Giza, till they reached the tail of Tanjur with its formidable rapids. Ibrahim later commented that here was one of the worst spots, and he was cold with apprehension for *El Thoraya's* safety. They moored at a rocky island, and Ibrahim and the *reis* scaled one of the rocks, and surveyed the scene with binoculars. It was calmer than previously, but its whirlpools were eddying in a way that made Ibrahim's head spin. But the crew had reached the calm of desperation. The vessel steamed slowly and carefully to that dreadful spot. When she got to the middle, the current was so violent that she could not go forward an inch. They swerved her eastwards towards the corridor which had been blasted during the winter, and with the aid of the cables and the manual winch she was towed laboriously across Tanjur. When they got to clear water they sailed on south between the rocky banks, until the marble hills of Akasha cataract were sighted on the horizon. They passed Akasha rapids without much difficulty — then the crew started asking about Dal.

*El Thoraya* reached Dal cataract at noon and pierced her way through its surging rapids, amid the harsh ridges of volcanic rock which were scattered across the river for 4 km. of its course. By dusk the

vessel was nearly in the middle of the cataract. The current was swift and the waves were mountainous. The steamer, though pressing on at full power, was at a complete standstill, and after a while it was being slowly forced back by the current. In all directions the crew could see nothing but the craggy ridges that blocked their way, with the waves rushing between them. They diverted the steamer to the west taking protection from one boulder after another until they reached the bank. On the west bank itself there was no sign of life, except for a few palm trees which had been neglected for ages and were covered with dead branches. Here they had a breathing space, and before sunset they resumed their efforts on Dal. They entered a broad yet very steep passage — only 160 metres long but with a drop of 6 metres — with rushing water. The entire crew pulled on the hawsers and turned the winch and it took them till well after dark to pull her up into clear water.

Leaving Dal behind, *El Thoraya* sailed safely along quiet waters between inhabited banks fringed with date palms and green cultivation. The inhabitants collected in groups at the river foreshore, waving and shouting congratulations to the crew. At Abri the whole population of the main village of Sukkot awaited the arrival of the boat on the river bank. After a very warm reception, the crew rested, proceeding south again next day.

The Fourth Cataract, compared with the Second and Third, offered no serious problems, as both *reis* and the crew knew the difficulties of the trip, and so managed to cross it without any great danger. At Delgo the Mahas had arranged a big reception for the steamer. All the inhabitants of Delgo and nearby villages had collected under the shade of a forest of date trees, close by the remains of an ancient city, and gave the crew a rousing reception. From Delgo they crossed the head of the Fourth Cataract and arrived safely at Kerma. Here the Danagla and Mahas collected together and made a great celebration in honour of the crew, who had by now successfully overcome the most dangerous part of their trip. There was no saint's tomb to be visited at Kerma, but the crew said a thanksgiving prayer after the celebration. From Kerma to Karima the Nile was broad and clear, and a regular navigation service plied here. This long stretch gave the crew a good period of rest, as their muscles and spirits had become quite exhausted by this time. At Karima the engineer Abd el Razag and the Shaigia inhabitants gave *El Thoraya* a victory reception and gave the crew generous hospitality.

When they left Karima their troubles began again. Their vessel entered a series of rapids around the volcanic islands that blocked a long stretch of the Nile's course. Like the Third Cataract, the Fifth was a chain of rapids separated by clear stretches. The first and most

formidable rapid was Khor el Utaash. Here the spate of flood had suddenly receded, and the steamer had a trying time. The channel was very narrow and the water rushed between two walls of solid basalt. *El Thoraya* staggered from left to right, striking the rocky banks: she could not be controlled in such a strong current and the continuous hammering of the rocks on her sides made the situation very dangerous. The crew in despair were about to abandon the attempt, but with patience and considerable effort they pulled it by the cables as they had done in Mashatawa, and with a final heave got her out of the head of that hazardous passage. On they went until they reached the cataract of Abu Hamama, where a big spate was increasing the force of the current and their difficulties alike. They secured the cables wherever they could and pulled with the winch and their hands. By inches *El Thoraya* ascended that steep passage. At the end of it, their hands bled and were swollen with blisters. They still continued, scaling one rapid after another, until they were face to face with the most terrible of all — Um Girab — which was also the last. Like runners approaching the tape, the crew in a last desperate spurt hauled the vessel up in one supreme effort and finally brought it into calm water. In their relief the crew started to shout, dance and congratulate each other.

They now sailed on until they reached Abu Hamad. The inhabitants of Mograt Island had crossed to Abu Hamad and joined the villagers who were waiting to see the first steamer that had dared all those barriers and reached their village. When it arrived, *El Thoraya* was given an enthusiastic reception. With her arrival at Abu Hamad, *El Thoraya* had ascended 650 feet since her departure from Wadi Halfa. Now that it had successfully conquered the Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth Cataracts, nothing remained ahead but the Sabaluka gorge at the Sixth Cataract downstream from Omdurman, which was wide and quiet enough for *El Thoraya* to cross with ease.

From Abu Hamad to Berber, the course was open and quiet, interrupted only by the rapids at El Karaba, which the steamer passed without trouble. At Berber *El Thoraya* was welcomed by all the inhabitants on the river foreshore, and at Atbara the first crowds were seen on the east bank of the Nile soon after the boat left Berber. On her arrival she was given a tumultuous reception, and amid the shouts and clapping the vessel came safely to anchor. A big public reception was given to the crew, attended by the general manager of Sudan Railways and both the military and civil governors. The crew stayed for some time in Atbara and before their departure, they received a telegram from a leading notable of the Jaaliyin at Shendi called Khalid Ahmed Khalid, inviting all the crew of the steamer to be his personal guests from the moment they arrived at Shendi until they reached Khartoum.

On their way upstream the crew were cheered by crowds of villagers on both banks of the Nile. When they arrived at Shendi a grand reception awaited them. The Jaaliyin had gathered from all nearby villages at Shendi and nearly all the inhabitants of Metemma had crossed over from the west bank to join the celebration. When the boat anchored the notables, led by the *nazir*, Sheikh Ibrahim Hag Mohamed, and Sheikh Khalid Ahmed Khalid, went on board and welcomed the crew. Then they led their guests — nearly seventy of them — to the place where the reception was to be held on the river bank. The crowds were overwhelming, and amid the beating of their copper drums the Jaaliyin cheered the crew. Bulls and rams were slaughtered and a big feast was prepared to mark the third occasion in their history that a vessel had reached their country from Wadi Halfa. The first was the flotilla with which Wolseley arrived at Metemma in 1885 after the battles of Abu Klea and Abu Kru, on its way to Khartoum to relieve Gordon. The second was the fleet of Kitchener after the battle of El Nikheila in Atbara in 1898, when he found Metemma in ruins after being sacked by Mahmoud Wad Ahmed. The third was *El Thoraya* — on a mission of peace. Ibrahim told me that the warm welcome and generous hospitality of the Jaaliyin surpassed all the previous receptions. The Jaaliyin were a brave tribe; thus they admired the courage of the crew. Before its departure the steamer was laden with rams, fruit, vegetables and all sorts of provisions offered by Sheikh Khalid Ahmed Khalid.

On 4 October they arrived at the Sixth Cataract. The flood had receded considerably by that time, but the Sabaluka gorge was full and quite passable, and they passed through it without any difficulty. After an hour's sailing in broad waters beyond the gorge, the minarets and white dome of the Mahdi's tomb came into sight at the far southern end of Kerrari hills. Their energies were refreshed and their spirits high. When they approached the northern end of Omdurman, they noticed big crowds lining the entire bank from Abu Rof to the Mawrada, greeting them as they sailed in mid-river, passing by Tuti Island on their left, while ahead of them, in the far south, the arches of Omdurman bridge dominated the view and indicated their approach to the confluence of the two Niles. At the Mogren they turned east and entered the Blue Nile. There was a big gathering all along Nile Avenue in Khartoum, hailing the crew as the victorious *El Thoraya*, still decorated with coloured flags and towing its two barges, sailed gracefully towards the dockyard. As she passed by the Palace, President Abboud could be seen standing on the roof waving both arms. They gave him an enthusiastic reply and a long hoot as a greeting. At the dockyard of Khartoum North all the workers and officials of the



Department of Steamers, led by their Director Sayed Abd el Rahman el Mahi, and a big crowd of Khartoum North inhabitants gave them a moving reception, with all the steamers in dock giving long hoots of welcome as the vessel steamed slowly and safely into dock. *El Thoraya* had covered a distance of 1,494 km. and climbed 230 metres, at an average speed of 29 km. each day. The journey had lasted fifty days.

When the news of her arrival became known, hundreds of telegrams were sent from Wadi Halfa, including a long one from me on behalf of the families of the crew and the inhabitants of the area, congratulating them on the successful conclusion of their historic adventure and expressing admiration for their courage.

An official reception was given by the Department of Steamers. All the crew, including Mohamed Ginawi, who had died at the start of the journey, were granted a monetary reward equivalent to one month's pay. However, they deserved a better reward, and I would have liked to see the chests of Ibrahim, the *reises* and the sailors decorated with orders and medals.

Thus ended the historic adventure of *El Thoraya*. It gave practical proof of the possibility of floating our fleet upstream to Khartoum instead of dismantling the steamers into sections and transporting them overland to Khartoum North docks for reassembly, with all the expense that would involve. Ibrahim made a valuable report on the trip, with his impressions of all the difficult points of the cataracts. He also put forward a detailed plan for the maintenance of the fleet before its evacuation from Wadi Halfa, at the onset of the next flood. Finally he recommended that the manual winches of all the steamers should be equipped with differential pulleys, and that a powerful electric winch should be planted on the river bank at Abka to help haul the steamers through El Bab el Kabir.



## FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR DEPARTURE

Returning to the situation in Wadi Halfa, after the departure of *El Thoraya* for Khartoum, the inhabitants and myself anxiously followed the news of the progress of building in Khashm el Girba. Rumours found fertile ground to grow and multiply. I suggested to the Commission that a weekly programme to announce progress and other information regarding the resettlement area should be broadcast from Radio Omdurman, so that the inhabitants could follow what was going on in their new home. This was agreed and a programme composed of a variety of news from both Khashm el Girba and Wadi Halfa was initiated. Once it had begun, the inhabitants were clearly in the picture, and rumours started to lose ground. We continued in this happy state until, by mid-October, and almost out of the blue, it was brought to my notice that the Ministerial Committee had again delayed the emigration date this time to January 1964. The news brought my spirits to ground level. The inhabitants too were surprised at the continuous changes in the emigration dates, and began to criticise the instability of government decisions. I telephoned my colleague Sayed Uthman Hussein in Khashm el Girba, and his view of the situation there was very discouraging. I felt embarrassed, and could find no way to satisfy the inquisitive inhabitants.

Towards the end of October I had access to a report sent by the Ministry of Irrigation to the railway authorities in Atbara, stating that all the inhabited area from Faras to Gemei would be inundated by the first spate in the reservoir, beginning at next flood. The report was sent to Sayed El Dirdiri el Sawi, the Inspector of the Railway at Wadi Halfa, and he was kind enough to show it to me. I noticed that no copy of it was sent to the Resettlement Commission in Khartoum. It happened that I saw it a day before my departure to Khartoum on a short visit. When I got there Sayed Allam confirmed that the information released in the report was accurate. Knowing the state of progress of construction in the resettlement area, I became very worried. I had a long talk with Sayed Allam on the situation and the hardship which the

inhabitants could expect if the construction of houses were not completed in time. The emigration operation of the area under immediate threat would take at least eight months, and if the start was to be further delayed the evacuation would not be completed before the flood. Allam shared my misgivings, and felt that a further delay in the start of emigration might be expected. Eventually he instructed me to think of an alternative plan for the temporary accommodation of the inhabitants in higher places near the villages that would be flooded, until their houses in Khashm el Girba were ready. Although I was aware of the impracticability of this suggestion, I thought it would be better to submit a full report to the Commission on my return to Wadi Halfa.

On 7 November I wrote a long report expressing my fears and describing the dangers to the inhabitants, if the emigration was not carried out before the area was submerged. Below are the main points of this letter.

The immediately threatened area included nine *omodias* with a total population of 33,000 inhabitants, which was nearly three-quarters of the whole population of the affected area. Their baggage was assessed at sixty-three train-loads, apart from their livestock. Without proper storage it would suffer from exposure and other damage. The proposed temporary accommodation meant that a complete operation would have to be carried out in the threatened area, in which all the belongings of the inhabitants would have to be moved bodily to the places of shelter where no car could go. Moreover, our camping requirement was assessed at 7,000 tents, the availability of which was very much in doubt.

The rising waters would submerge the main roads on the east and west banks, thus making it impossible for us to contact the camps. Likewise contact by river would be impracticable, owing to the fact that the falling houses and the forests of date trees would cause hindrance to navigation for a wide distance on the foreshore adjacent to the camps.

The inhabitants would be staying like refugees who had lost their homes and source of income, and would be in a constant state of famine and privation. Their livestock, too, would perish from hunger, as no green leaf would be left. Moreover the burning heat of July–August would be unendurable, if there were no adequate protection against it.

Health conditions would be threatened by the absence of proper latrines and the lack of proper sewerage, which would breed flies, which in turn would spread disease. Furthermore, the rising water would flood all the cemeteries and the village latrines, causing active disintegration of organic matter, which might lead to epidemics of dreadful diseases such as typhoid or cholera.

As all the inhabitants would be facing grave dangers which might

result in loss of life and property, their morale would certainly suffer, and this would cause them to despise all the good work the government was doing for them.

Finally I made two suggestions to the Commission for avoiding the unhappy situation which we expected. Either the Sudan Government should approach the United Arab Republic to delay their storage programme for six months to enable the houses in Khashm el Girba to be completed, though a favourable response to this request was remote; or a special state of emergency should be declared, aiming at stopping all building development in the provinces and directing all the masons, artisans and foremen to go to Khashm el Girba and help in the construction of the villages.

When he received this report, Sayed Allam, who shared my feelings about the Nubians, brought its contents to the notice of the Ministerial Committee. The Egyptian Government, who were already tied to a strict programme of storage, naturally refused the request, and it was left entirely to the ministerial committee to find one way or another to solve the problem.

On 10 December I was invited to attend a meeting of the Ministerial Committee to be held in Khartoum four days later. The meeting was also attended by Sayed Allam Hassan, Sayed Abdullahi Shaddad, on behalf of the consultant engineers, and the Commissioner for Compensation. At that meeting Sayed Shaddad gave a detailed review of the state of construction at Khashm el Girba, village by village, contractor by contractor. The work generally was lagging behind and the situation was discouraging, but it was not quite hopeless. He concluded by saying that two months would be needed to complete the housing for the first phase of the emigration, and so he requested that the target date should be further shifted to March. In this he was supported by the Commissioner for Compensation, who said his lists were not ready and that he would require two months to check them and hand them over to the cashiers.

Then came my turn for a word. I told the meeting frankly that the target date had already been shifted three times. This had already shaken the confidence of the inhabitants in government decisions and judgement. Moreover all the inhabitants of the first and second phases of the emigration had been kept waiting in an unsettled state since July, with part of their baggage packed, and their minds wholly set on the move to their new home. Furthermore, according to the final emigration programme we had prepared, which was already congested, the evacuation of the threatened area would take fully eight months, excluding an interlude for the month of Ramadan. This would virtually take us to the date of the flooding of Wadi Halfa. Any further delay

would have serious consequences, and no further excuses would be acceptable.

General Irwa and Sayed Allam supported my argument, and Sayed Suliman Hussein, who was aware of the condition of his own people, stood by me and insisted that the deadline for the emigration should remain final. Then the ministers considered all the possibilities of completing the villages in time with Sayed Abdullahi Shaddad, who had long experience with building contractors and who appreciated how critical the situation was. He promised to seek the co-operation of the contractors in adding more shifts to their work timetables and increasing their efforts. He was confident that, in the circumstances, the contractors would appreciate the situation of the people for whom they were building the houses. The Ministerial Committee then set the date for the departure of the first emigration train for 6 January and I was instructed to act accordingly. The Commissioner for Compensation was also directed to redouble his efforts and start payment in good time. When the meeting was over I felt great relief.

Back at Wadi Halfa, I held a series of meetings with all the officials concerned, in which I created a system of committees to which we distributed the work. We assigned certain duties to each of them. The first committee was responsible for the distribution of new houses at Khashm el Girba. It consisted of the District Engineer, an administrative officer, the *omda* of the area and the village sheikh. The Commissioner for Resettlement would furnish them with detailed plans of each village, showing the developed plots in consecutive numbers. On receipt of these plans, they would get hold of the lists of entitled owners from the Commissioner for Compensation. This done, the committee would take the specific map and list of the village under evacuation, and attend a general meeting of all the owners concerned. At this meeting they would show the map to the owners and explain its details. Then the entitled owners would be asked to group themselves with their existing neighbours, taking into account the number of houses in each block, and each of them, in agreement with his immediate neighbours, would select his new house. After this was done, the committee would list the results in duplicate and in the consecutive numerical order of the houses in the new villages, and issue each owner with a card, printed for the purpose, bearing his name as owner, his village, his sheikh, the number of his house and the number of his dependents. This card had to be signed by me as Commissioner for Emigration, and stamped with a special seal. Immediately after the distribution of cards, the committee was to send one copy of the list ahead of the passenger train to the Commissioner for Resettlement, to enable him to place identification plates on all the houses at Khashm el

Girba before the arrival of their owners. The other copy of the list would be kept in the office.

It is noteworthy that in most cases the existing neighbours stuck to each other, and only very rarely did they split up. This arrangement offered a good opportunity for relatives scattered among many villages to come together and live next door to each other.

The second committee was concerned with payment for packing of baggage and journey meals. It was composed of an administrative officer, the *omda* and the village sheikh concerned, and it would do its work immediately after the distribution of houses was completed. Its duties were to pay every family head £S 2 to help him buy packing material, and to pay each family money for food on the journey, at the rate of 50 pt. per person; and to see that the packing material such as jute sacking, baskets and ropes were in plentiful supply at the market, and that sufficient bread was available in the bakeries during the emigration.

The third committee was concerned with portorage and transport of baggage to the trains, and was presided over by Sayed El Dirdiri el Sawi, with some of his staff as members. It was assigned several duties: first, to assess the quantity of baggage of each individual batch leaving, so as to determine the number of waggons required for the train; secondly, to receive the baggage from the emigrant owner at the doorstep of his house and to issue him with necessary documents, including an insurance policy, on the spot; thirdly, to recruit the necessary number of porters on the terms applied by Sudan Railways for portorage of consignments, and to see that the porters were careful in loading the baggage on the trucks and reloading it into the railway waggons; fourthly, to appoint a couple of carpenters to repair any damage that might occur during the loading and reloading; fifthly, to control all motor truck drivers engaged in the operation and to see that they did their work satisfactorily; sixthly, to see that the railway waggons were loaded according to the consecutive order of residence at Khashm el Girba to enable them to be sorted out easily on arrival; and finally, two lists of the contents of every wagon, bearing the names of owners of any lot of baggage, their village, their railway mark and number of pieces should be stuck to the inner and outer sides of every wagon door to help in the identification of the baggage of each individual at the railway station in Khashm el Girba.

The fourth committee attended to the evacuation of the sick, the aged, pregnant women and newly delivered babies and their mothers. Its members were the Medical Inspector and his staff. They had to ensure that all these cases should be taken to the train by ambulance, and that the sick and aged should be given the beds on the special coach provided for them. Advanced pregnancies and new deliveries should be

comfortably accommodated in the combined first- and second-class coach. A special berth in the combined coach should be turned into a small theatre for emergency operations during the journey, and a sufficient supply of medicinal drugs and material should be provided in every train. Mental cases, though few, should be well looked after and given drugs to keep them calm during the journey. A medical officer, a midwife and attendants should accompany each train.

The fifth and last committee was to supervise the evacuation of livestock. The veterinary officer, in collaboration with the railway authorities, should assess the livestock accompanying each goods train and ascertain that the required number of animal waggons were attached to it. He should appoint the required number of attendants or herdsmen to load the animals, attend them during the journey and look after them at Khashm el Girba, until they were received by their owners. A sufficient supply of fodder and water should be provided to keep the herds in good condition until they were taken over by their owners in Khashm el Girba.

In addition to the above committees I decided to appoint an emigration officer to accompany each passenger train. He would be provided with £S 100 in cash to enable him to deal with any unforeseen circumstance, such as the death of a passenger, or unexpected long delays due to a railway accident or a cut in the line. On his arrival at Khashm el Girba he should submit his account of expenditure, if any, and pay the balance into the chest of the Resettlement Office. The railway inspector had agreed to allow a mobile private buffet to accompany the train to provide the passengers with tea, coffee, soft drinks and light meals at their own expense during the journey.

The meeting was officially notified that the evacuation operation would start on 5 January 1964, in accordance with the following schedule:

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| 5 Jan.  | Loading and despatch of baggage of the first batch of Faras West.                 |
| 6 Jan.  | Departure of the first emigration train carrying the first batch from Faras West. |
| 7 Jan.  | Loading and despatch of the baggage of the remaining batch from Faras West.       |
| 8 Jan.  | Departure of remainder of Faras West inhabitants.                                 |
| 9 Jan.  | Despatch of house belongings of the first batch of Sarra West.                    |
| 10 Jan. | Departure of first batch of Sarra West.   |
| 12 Jan. | Despatch of baggage of last batch of Sarra West.                                  |
| 13 Jan. | Last batch of evacuees leave from Sarra West.                                     |
| 16 Jan. | Ramadan month begins. Interlude.  |

At the other end, my counterpart, the Commissioner for Resettlement in Khashm el Girba, had arranged for the numbering of houses and fixing of plates at the house doors bearing the names of owners; the sorting out and transportation of baggage to the new houses before the arrival of the owners; that every house should be provided with a reasonable quantity of firewood, a bottle of kerosene, a jar full of water and a matchbox; a supply of fresh food for the first day after the emigrants' arrival, after which they would receive their ration supply out of the quota provided by the Food and Agriculture Organisation; a supply of fodder for the livestock; and distribution of *hawashas*, i.e. farms, to the family heads on the day following their arrival.

When all the evacuation arrangements were distributed among the committees I spent some time drafting a small booklet which I called *Dalil el Muhajir* (The Emigrant's Guide) describing the course to be followed by every head of family during the evacuation period, taking him step by step, showing him what to do at every stage, in simple language, beginning from the packing of his baggage, until he entered his new house in Khashm el Girba. It was printed at Khartoum with pictures of many aspects of Khashm el Girba, and a map showing the route of the journey. We distributed thousands of copies to the inhabitants.

Meanwhile, the energetic El Dirdiri on his own initiative had gone to



15. Inspector Dirdiri el Sawi checking the insurance policies for the baggage before it is put on board the train

the villages with a team of packing experts from among his workers, making useful demonstrations to the inhabitants of the best ways to pack their fragile objects and pieces of furniture. Paper fibre was not available in sufficient quantity, so they found an alternative by using date-tree fibres and unused clothes for the packing of breakables. This demonstration was very useful, particularly to the Nubians, who had never experienced a mass movement of their baggage.

As the final day approached, I constantly visited the northern villages, spending most time in Faras West and Sarra West, explaining to the evacuees what they were required to do before they left. I told them of all the arrangements we had made for their safe journey, and those made by my colleague, Sayed Uthman Hussein, in Khashm el Girba for their reception and resettlement. Sayed Allam, who was keen to know the details of our situation during those climactic days, came to us, and we toured the west bank together, visiting Faras, Sarra and Argin and giving the inhabitants of these villages the details of their safe journey and reception at Khashm el Girba. He also held a meeting with the Commissioner for Compensation, where he was briefed on the arrangements made for the payment of compensation according to schedule. Allam then hurried back to Khartoum, after which he flew to Khashm el Girba, to make sure that things at the other end were proceeding satisfactorily.

On invitation by the sports clubs of the various quarters of Halfa town I held several useful meetings with the inhabitants in which I gave them a clear picture of the anticipated pre- and post-emigration problems and the arrangements made to enable them to combat them. The inhabitants found in these meetings satisfactory replies to all their questions concerning the emigration. The big attendance was clear evidence of the keen desire to grasp every bit of information. Along with these meetings, our information office had redoubled its efforts, and its daily bulletin was widely circulated.

On 1 January we had a great celebration to mark the last anniversary of Sudanese Independence that would occur in Wadi Halfa. The whole occasion was devoted to the emigration, and in a long address, I gave all the details of the arrangements made for the safe evacuation of the inhabitants, and the great economic upheaval they were expected to undergo in their new life at Khashm el Girba. Ali Ahmed Ali, the Chairman of the Municipal Council at that time, who felt that the moment had come to step forward and lead his people in those crucial days, spoke eloquently about the general anxiety of the people during those critical moments. 'If we are sent to paradise, our hearts will still yearn after our original home,' he said. But he advised the people to be patient and accept the will of God with a good heart. Further, he



stated, 'We have sacrificed our land for the benefit of our mother-country, and we have to purify this sacrifice with patience and endurance.' He urged them to follow the directions and advice of the emigration office which desired their safe journey and the safety of their baggage. Then he was followed by Sayed Mirghani Ali Ibrahim, who delivered an emotional speech, full of lamentation at leaving the home of their ancestors. Then Salhein made a good address on similar lines to that of Sayed Ali Ahmed. The celebration was attended by nearly everybody in the town and nearby villages, and both the army garrison and the sports clubs contributed gay items to the programme. It was clear that everybody there came with a serious face and a sad heart, as though attending the funeral of a dear relative.

After the celebration, the notables of Faras and Sarra West informed me that they were intending to throw a big farewell party at Sarra village on the morning of 3 January. Omda Salah of Faras told me that his village might have been a more proper place for the party, as they were going to leave before Sarra, but as all his people were busy either packing their bags or receiving their compensation payments, and because of the deteriorating health of an old man in their village who had long been in a hopeless condition and was expected to die at any moment, they had agreed with the *omda* of Sarra, Hassan Mohamed Ali, that the party should be held in his village. They also informed me that they had already invited nearly all the people of the locality and the inhabitants of Halfa town. I agreed to this kind gesture and promised to arrange transport for all wishing to attend. Meanwhile I directed our information officer, Sayed Mohamed Fadlalla, to co-operate with them in compiling the programme for the party.

At the same time in Wadi Halfa all our preparations for the evacuation day were gathering momentum. The new railway passenger coaches had already arrived at Wadi Halfa workshops. I had a feeling of satisfaction when I looked at them. They were all brand new and their seats were wide and comfortable. They were equipped with fans and exterior lighting to enable the passengers to get down and have a walk when the train stopped at an unlighted station. I was particularly delighted when I saw the hospital coach with two rows of clean and comfortable beds and small tables placed within easy reach of each patient. The empty goods waggons had also arrived in large numbers and were shunted to sidings in Halfa and Angash stations. The Department of Steamers too had allocated a steamer to be ready on the river bank at Faras before sunset on 4 January. In a tour with my assistant, Sayed Nadim, through Faras village, we saw that the lanes were covered with sand dunes, which would make it impossible for our heavy Commer trucks to move with their loads to the steamer, so we

decided to collect all our Land-rover trucks which, though of small capacity, had four-wheel drive and so could do the job better. The late Saad el Din Abd el Ghani 'Birbis', who signed the contract with the railway authorities for portage, smuggled more than a hundred Saidis from Aswan to carry out the loading and unloading of baggage.

As regards the animals, the veterinary officer made all his arrangements for their fodder and collected a large stock of identity plates on which he would write the names of owners, attach them to a strong rope which he would tie to the necks of the animals consigned. The medical officer converted one of the first-class cabins into a small operating theatre, equipped with the required instruments, drugs and medical material. He appointed the attendants and midwife who would accompany the first batch and examined all the sick cases due for evacuation. In addition he paid a visit to Faras village, where he examined all the pregnant women and bedridden old people. Meanwhile engineer Hassan Taha, carrying the map of the new Faras village, led his committee to Faras and started the distribution of houses. The Commissioner of Compensation, who was working day and night, went to Faras with a team of cashiers and accountants, a chest of money and a guard, and started payment. In a hurried visit to Faras I was pleased to see that things were going very smoothly and according to plan. Omda Sheikh Salah on seeing me coming led a group of about thirty men, whom he introduced as absentee heads of families, who had finally come to join their families before the emigration. Their Egyptian accent confirmed the statement of the *omda*, and I gathered from them that another batch of their absentee colleagues from Egypt would soon follow. I asked Salah about the condition of the sick old man, and understood that he was seriously ill.

On 3 January a huge farewell party was held in Sarra West. It was attended by all the inhabitants of Faras, Sarra and nearby villages, in addition to a good number from Wadi Halfa town. I took the opportunity to invite the press correspondents who were in Wadi Halfa to cover the start of the emigration, and we all went to Sarra. We crossed the Nile at Sarra East, and passing the date trees came to an open space marked by a group of *dom* trees, whence we could see a big gathering in front of the village. A wide shed of palm wood had been erected and roofed with mats to shelter the guests, while the rest of the villagers had crowded in a semi-circle in front of it. The shed itself was decorated with date branches and small flags of every colour. While I was greeting the people, Sheikh Mohamed Abdu, the Imam of Faras mosque, informed me that their sick man had died the previous night. 'It is better for him to die here than in the train,' Sheikh Mohamed commented with satisfaction. I observed that they had been worried in

case he would die *en route*, which would be taken as a bad omen, apart from the inconvenience which the laying-out of his body and burial at one of the stations would cause them. It was one of the rare occasions when the news of death was good.

I delivered a long address to the gathering in which I shared with them the feeling of sorrow for leaving the land of their ancestors and the place of their birth, in which they had lived since prehistoric times and which they loved so much. I then reminded them that they were not the first people to leave their homeland and emigrate and perpetuate life in another place. The history of mankind was full of emigration movements which had given rise to the flowering of great civilisations. To support this argument I quoted the effects of the emigrations of the Americans, the Australians and the Arabs, who had carried their civilisations to remote places once dark and primitive, and had in time flourished and advanced. I also recalled the mass emigration of the Sudan tribes during the Mahdi's revolution, and then dwelt on the radical changes expected to affect their lives in Khashm el Girba. I pointed out that they would lose their date trees, which were the backbone of the economy of their original home, and that their economy would definitely take a different course, particularly as their current mode of agriculture was confined to the cultivation of small patches of land, normally carried out by mothers with the help of their children. In Khashm el Girba the area was wide, the soil fertile and the irrigation easy. These were the required bases of sound agricultural economy. There would be no more trouble with the *sagiyas* and their *alases*, *aregides* or bulls in Khashm el Girba. The water level would be raised by the dam into the canals, and the regulators would release the water for the irrigation of the farms. But the farms were big, and would need more than the effort of the mistress of the house and her children to work it and derive a good income from it. The loss of the regular income from dates should be taken as a serious incentive to spend more effort on agriculture, and I warned them that any failure to attend to the farm would result in a loss of earnings, which would bring about a general deterioration of their standard of living instead of improving it. Moreover, the new scheme at Khashm el Girba was one of our great national assets, for the development of which the tax-payer had paid so much money. Lazy tenants and idle cultivators would have no place in it, and they would be thrown out. The expected shortage of labour could be combated partly by the expected return of the able-bodied absentees, who would at last live with their families in their new home, and — even more important — by the creation of co-operative mechanised agricultural institutes, which would enable the land to be worked communally. Finally I wished them all happiness and prosperity in their new home.

Ali Ahmed Ali made a moving address, in which he spoke at length of the sentimental feelings that tied them to their homeland and the general sorrow everybody felt at leaving it for good. Then, adopting a religious tone, he said: 'Our great Prophet was the pioneer of emigrations, and his emigration from Mecca to Yathrib played a significant role in spreading the mission of Islam to mankind.' Then he quoted verses from the Koran and sacred sayings, advocating patience and submission to the will of God. It could be seen that Ali was extremely moved by the occasion and his voice broke many times while he read his address. He was followed by Imam Mohamed Abdu, who gave himself the title of 'hero of the emigration' and delivered a light factual speech intermingled with jokes, which created an atmosphere of relief.

The generous inhabitants of Faras and Sarra, who were the hosts, had killed three bulls for their guests, and offered everybody lunch of *fatta* (bread soup), boiled rice and meat. After that delicious meal the celebration came to an end.

On the afternoon of 4 January I went to Faras, with my assistant Nadim and the information officer, to supervise the final touches to our operations. There we found the fleet of Land-rovers had already arrived, and we saw that the baggage of the first batch had been carefully packed and piled up at the gates of the village houses. The regiment of Saidi porters were also there, camped in the shade of the palm trees near the village. The steamer occupied by the railway staff with their



16. Loading the baggage of the first batch at Faras

policy forms and marking equipment was moored at the river bank. The veterinary attendants were there too, and the empty goods train was standing at the station on the east bank. The Commissioner for Compensation with his team of cashiers finished the payment in time. Omda Salah informed me that the committee for the distribution of the new houses had completed their job, and that every householder had been issued with a card and had received his payment of expenses for packing and journey meals. In the evening we returned satisfied to Wadi Halfa.

## THE EMIGRATION

The next day, 5 January, Nadim and I crossed to Faras before sunrise on the police launch, and found that the evacuation of baggage had already begun, under the supervision of Dirdiri. The soft dunes of sand had slowed down traffic to the river bank; many vehicles had stuck in the sand and one Land-rover had burnt up its dynamo, which took some time to replace.

When the steamer had taken aboard the first load, we crossed with it to the east bank to supervise the reloading on to the train. While the railway staff and porters were sorting out the baggage and loading the goods waggons, Nadim and I sat on a flat rock overlooking the station enjoying a snatch of breakfast. From here we saw a government truck coming at high speed from Halfa town; when it was closer, we saw that it was loaded with policemen carrying fire-arms and wearing their steel helmets. My first impression was that the situation in Halfa was unsafe and I was worried. When the vehicle arrived, the late Ali Massaad, the police officer, who wore his pistol, got down and approached us, but when he found us happily taking our breakfast and the porters singing as they loaded the baggage in the train, he laughed and looked relieved. He explained that it was being rumoured in Halfa town that Faras people had changed their minds about emigrating to Khashm el Girba and refused to hand over their baggage to the railway staff; that when Nadim and I interfered they had beaten us up, and that I had crossed the border to Egypt, while Nadim had been taken hostage. The rumour was so strong that everybody in the town believed it, and so he had collected what force was available and hurried down to relieve us. I looked at Nadim and found him helpless with laughter — I was laughing too. I said to Ali Massaad that I had no objection to being beaten up by the Nubians, but to flee and seek refuge in Egypt was very unlike me. After he had had a cup of tea with us I directed Ali Massaad to hurry to the boundary post at Faras East and telephone his men that we were safe and things were going on normally.

In the afternoon all the baggage and animals of the first batch were safely loaded on to the train. It took the steamer three trips to clear it

all from the west bank and three operation shifts by the porters. At 5 p.m. the locomotive sounded three long whistles to announce the departure of the first emigration train to Khashm el Girba. At Halfa station Engineer Hassan Taha handed the ticket collector a big envelope containing the lists of the distribution of houses and other information regarding the first batch, which was addressed to the Commissioner for Resettlement in Khashm el Girba. The ticket collector was instructed to hand it over personally to the Commissioner the moment he arrived at the other end. The animal waggons were stuffed with green fodder from Rashid's farm, and sufficient water was provided for the journey. This done the train left Wadi Halfa and disappeared into the Atmur desert.

On my return, the first thing I did was to contact Khashm el Girba by telephone and inform Sayed Allam and Uthman about the departure



17. Sayed Ali Ahmed Ali, who was in charge of the first batch of the emigration

of the train and the letter we sent with the ticket collector to the Commissioner for Resettlement. Moreover I directed Hassan Taha, the engineer, to contact Khashm el Girba and dictate over the telephone all the information contained in the lists, so that they could start their allocation of houses of the first batch in good time before the train arrived. Then I went to Ali Ahmed Ali, the emigration officer for the first batch, who had constantly visited Faras and had talks with the evacuees. We reviewed his duties and discussed every eventuality that might occur on the journey. Ali, a man of calibre, was well aware of the importance of his mission, specially for the first group. His wisdom and genuine love for his fellows and the respect that he enjoyed from all sections of the community made me feel that he was the right man to lead the advance party.

I returned to my house before midnight to find my wife had taken a telephone message from my brother in Khartoum requesting that I should ring him on my arrival. I got hold of him in a few minutes, and he told me that a rumour was circulating in Khartoum that we were in trouble at Faras and that I had fled to the Egyptian border. Although my wife had said the news was false, he still wanted to know the facts from me: I reassured him. No doubt the rumour that had been circulating in the town in the morning was communicated by the telephone operators to their colleagues in Khartoum, who passed it round in their turn.

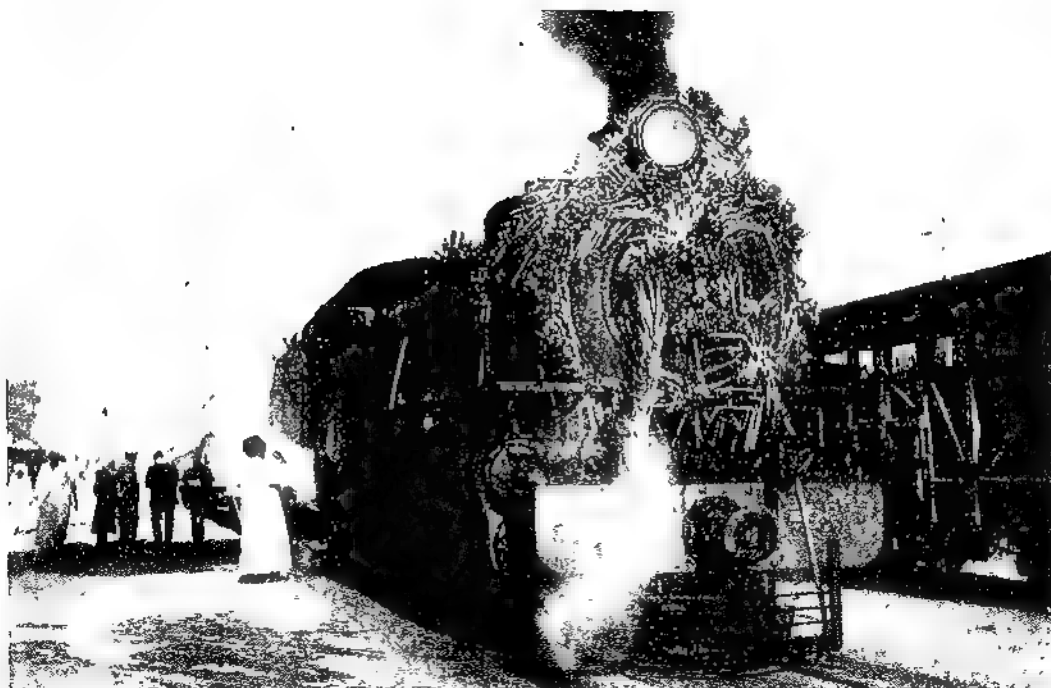
On 6 January we left for Faras at dawn. We found the passenger train ready in the station and the medical attendants cleaning the hospital coach and plumping up the pillows on the beds. We went through all the coaches and found them satisfactory, with a sufficient supply of water. After sunrise we crossed to the west bank. The medical officer and some of his staff were already in the village making their final examination of the old evacuees. They informed the relatives of the hospital cases that arrangements were being made for their evacuation direct to the train when they reached Halfa town. I noticed that many people came from Faras East, the two Sarras, Adindan and Ballana on the Egyptian border to bid the first batch farewell. The strong smell of roasted meat which filled the air showed that all the housewives were preparing food for the journey, and the scattered fowl feathers blown by the wind indicated that many chickens had been slaughtered that day. The railway staff, under the guidance of Dirdiri, were assessing the baggage of the second batch, and I observed that Sheikh Mohamed Abdu, who was due to leave on the next train, had already heaped his baggage in front of the gate of his house.

The ambulance with a team of dressers arrived at mid-day to take the sick, the old and the advanced pregnancy cases to the steamer. At



2 p.m. all the bags, baskets and mattresses were placed at the gates and the porters had started to load them on the trucks and on to the steamer. At 3 p.m. the evacuation of the old and sick was carried out under the supervision of the medical officer and they were taken to a special area in the steamer. Then came the great moment. After they had come out of their houses, most of the family heads entered again for a final look, and when they emerged again they took away the wooden keys of their gates as keepsakes. Then in a big procession they went to the cemetery, where they read verses of the Koran over the graves of their dead relatives, and came to the steamer in tears; some were crying loudly. Even when the steamer departed they kept looking at their village, knowing they would never see it again, and wiping away tears. The old were the most sentimental, and their final visit to the cemetery had revived very sad memories of their dead colleagues who were to be left in their graves for the flood to cover them over. The occasion was extremely touching and we all got sad and shared their feelings. The only section of the community who seemed unaffected were the children, to whom the journey by train to a new place was a novelty.

Before the departure of the steamer everybody in the village, emigrants and their relatives, came on board and the boat crossed to the east bank with a full load. When we arrived at the east bank, the old and sick were taken first to the hospital coach. The midwife conducted the advanced pregnancy cases to their cabins in the first-class coach, and the rest of the passengers followed and took their places in third class. Sheikh Mohamed Abdu, 'the hero of the emigration', who had left his baggage piled up in front of his house gate in the village, had suddenly decided to go with the first batch to Khashm el Girba. He asked me to arrange despatch of his family and baggage with the second batch, to which I consented. The press correspondents who decided to accompany the emigrants in their first journey to their new home, were content with a second-class cabin. The train drivers and their assistants had decorated the front of the locomotive with date branches and flowers to celebrate the historic occasion. The inhabitants of Faras East had all left their village and come to the station to wish their neighbours well. At 5 p.m. when the train gave its long whistle, nearly all the passengers burst into tears, and there was a tumult of sounds and shouts from the crowd in the station. I listened attentively to distinguish what they were saying and after some moments everyone seemed to be shouting as they waved their hands and turbans to the passengers, '*Afialogo - heir ogo*', or 'good health and prosperity'. As the wheels of the train began to turn, the exodus of the Halfawin from their country, soon to be inundated by the lake waters of the High



18. The first emigration train

Dam, had truly begun. The passengers were still looking at their village across the Nile as it got smaller and smaller the further south the train went, until a sudden bend in the track around a hill hid the distant village from view.

At Sarra East, Dibeira and Ashkeit, the entire population crowded along the railway line waving with their hands or with date branches, and shouting the slogan of the day, '*Afiálogo - heir ogo - adeela adeela*'. At Dabarosa, all the inhabitants, and those of Tawfikia, Arkawit and El Jebel, gathered in the open space that separated the railway line from the buildings, bidding farewell to the passengers. The train reached Angash station at 6 p.m. Here I took Ali Ahmed Ali aside and handed him £S 100 to meet any unforeseen emergency *en route* and gave him a roll of white calico wrapped in paper which I requested him to keep secretly in his bag for use as a shroud, in case a passenger should die on the way. The medical officer had evacuated all the hospital cases in the first batch and installed them comfortably on their beds in the hospital coach. Then I took Nadim and the information officer and passed through all the coaches, shaking hands with every individual and giving them our best wishes. They were all sad and some were still in tears. The station was crowded with people, and when the train left they gave it a warm farewell. The Degheim people had set their differences aside and gathered in a big crowd in front of the village to say their good-bye to the passengers. Nadim and I followed it by car to the airport, and with a final wave we returned to the town.

At 7.30 p.m. I put through an urgent telephone call to Khashm el Girba. Taha Uthman answered, telling me that everybody there was anxiously waiting for our news. He added that there was a rumour circulating to the effect that Faras people had changed their minds at the last moment and refused to leave their village, and everyone in Khashm el Girba was uncertain about our situation. I gave him a brief statement about the departure of the first train, and told him the time it had left Angash station. I could hear him passing the news to Sayed Allam, who now came to the 'phone and spoke to me. I apologised for not being able to speak to them during the day as we were busy with the evacuation of the first batch on the west bank, where there was no telephone service. I said that our situation here was quite different from what the rumour-mongers apparently wished. Then I gave him an account of all the steps we had taken for the departure, the morale of the evacuees, the warm farewell given to them by all the inhabitants, the time of departure of the train and the particulars of the passengers. He seemed much relieved, and was very pleased to hear that we had such a successful start. He informed me that the late General Hassan Bashir Nasr, the Army chief-of-staff, and a member of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces together with General Mohamed Ahmed Irwa, the Minister of the Interior, the late Sayed Suliman Hussein, the Minister of Communications, and Sayed Mekki el Manna, the Minister of Irrigation, had all arrived at Khashm el Girba to attend the great reception arranged for the first batch. Then General Irwa spoke to me, congratulating us on the successful start, and assuring me that all arrangements for the reception and the welfare of the emigrants were complete at their end. Finally Uthman Hussein spoke and I gave him all the details and particulars of the passengers and the time of departure of the train from Wadi Halfa. Similar calls were made to the Military Governor in Atbara and the Civil Governor in El Damer.

A detailed report was phoned by our information officer to Radio Omdurman, which broadcast it at 8 p.m., and on the following day a special programme was broadcast to celebrate the occasion which included my farewell address to Sarra which was repeated many times. On the morning of 7 January all the press headlined the emigration news. All the steps taken in the evacuation operation were well covered by the correspondents who attended the final days with us in Wadi Halfa.

Following the train to Khashm el Girba, Ali Ahmed Ali informed me that at Abu Hamad all the Rubatab tribe came to the station to meet them, giving them a warm reception and offering many gifts to the passengers. Abbas el Tigani, the executive officer of Berber, came down to meet the train at Abu Hamad. Tea was prepared in big *geizans* (giant

pans) and every passenger was served. From Abu Hamad to Atbara, the passengers were received kindly and sympathetically at all the stations. At Atbara, a crowd of people, including some from El Damer, was present when the train arrived. The Nubian community of Atbara had naturally come to see their cousins on their way to the new home, but unfortunately nobody was allowed near the train. A big reception party was then held in the station attended by Brigadier Mohamed el Mahdi Hamid, Sayed Hassan Girein and Sayed Mohamed el Fadl. Moving speeches were delivered expressing the concern of all inhabitants over the destiny of all Halfa people, and wishing them happiness in their new settlement. Before the train left many gifts — sacks of sugar, wheat flour, rice, tins of cheese, butter and oil and, of course, sweets to the children — were offered by private individuals and the local authorities. At Musmar station the Hadandawa came to the train carrying big kettles of tea, which they distributed to the passengers in the coaches with many greetings.

In Haya station the train arrived late at night, but in spite of the inconvenient arrival time and cold weather, many people were waiting at the station to meet them. Among them was Sheikh Beirag, a Hadandawa chief, who had come from a remote place with the leading men of his section, carrying sacks of flour, sugar and tins of butter and honey. He delivered a long speech in the Beja dialect, although he knew Arabic well; he wanted to show the Nubians that the Hadandawa had their own dialect, like the Nubians. He welcomed them and assured them that the Beja tribe were aware of the sacrifice they had made for the benefit of the whole nation, and would respect them and live in good relations and mutual happiness with them. Then he offered his gift, asking that, though very small, it should be accepted as a sign of friendship. Ali told me that everybody was moved by the genuine feeling of these people, and in reply he thanked him and assured him of the respect and gratitude every one of them felt towards him and his people.

In Aroma, all the Hadandawa from Timintai, Hadalia, Matateib, Girgir, Togan and Hamash Koreib had come to the station to see their new neighbours. The sight of them with their greasy fuzzy hair, wearing their swords and daggers and carrying their sticks aslant their shoulders, was really striking. Nazir Mohamed el Amin Tirik and all the notables of his tribe had turned up to meet the train. All the inhabitants of Aroma — merchants, workers, farmers, officials and school boys and girls — had massed in the open space adjacent to the station platform, awaiting the arrival of the train. When the train entered the station and passed by the factory buildings, the cardboard factory released a long whistle of greeting to the passengers. Then the whole station burst into



19. Reception by the Hadandawa at Aroma

tumultuous uproar. Women were beating their *dallukas* and singing. The Hadandawa, beating their *nazir's* copper drums, were shouting their traditional welcome in Beja '*Dabaywa - dabaywa*', while others were carrying big cloth posters bearing slogans of welcome. In fact everyone was waving and shouting. Ali made a good speech of thanks to the crowds, and before the train left, heaps of gifts were taken into the coaches.

In Kassala masses of human beings began gathering in the station once the train had left Aroma. All the inhabitants had turned up and many people came from the Khatmia and Beni Amer villages along the banks of the Gash river. The wandering Rashaida who happened to be near Kassala also came. When the train arrived the reception was tremendous. *Dalhukas* were beating, women were singing, and everybody in the station was shouting welcome. 'We are really moved by their reception,' Ali was saying, 'Kassala people have always been kind

and affectionate, and during our first visit to them in April 1960 they were sympathetic and generous to us.' Speeches of encouragement were made by leading personalities on behalf of the inhabitants, expressing their welcome to their new fellow-citizens and their pleasure that Halfa people were coming to live next door to their town and share their efforts to develop the province. Ali made an eloquent reply, and was followed by Sheikh Mohamed Abdu, who made a cheeky speech, intermingled with phrases in broken English, which caused laughter and a sense of relief. The Kassala people, especially the farmers, had collected heaps upon heaps of sacks and baskets of grapefruit, lemons, bananas and huge quantities of vegetables of every sort in addition to other provisions and stuffed them in the coaches. The quantity of gifts presented on the way was so big that when the train arrived at Khashm el Girba, it was loaded with more gifts than passengers, and there would hardly have been room for any more. From Kassala the train went direct to Khashm el Girba. When they crossed the Butana bridge the passengers had a view of the Atbara river. It made a poor impression, compared with the wide Nile which they had left behind, but they wondered at the huge herds of Shukria camels that crowded along both its banks, watering at that time of the day. At Khashm el Girba, Uthman Hussein, his assistant Mohamed Mahgoub Hasaballa and their staff met the train, greeted the passengers and accompanied them to the resettlement area, while the train made its way along the new diversion line.

The passengers became restive as the train sped on towards the resettlement area. All of them clung to the coach windows, trying to get a first glimpse of their new home. The high banks of the eastern branch canal hid the villages from their view as the train was speeding towards Sheikh Omer station. When the train crossed the bridge, the landscape of their new home suddenly came in sight. At that moment all the train windows were clusters of heads sticking out, looking with anxious eyes and impatient hearts. To their right, near the foot of El Meigil hill, the white houses of Faras East, 'Village No. 33', built by Turriff, was quite distinct, against the green cultivation of the experimental farm in the background. Right in front of them and still at a distance they could see the signal tower, and still further away the station buildings. To their left and still ahead, half way to the horizon, the white buildings of their village were glinting through the continuous flicker of mirage. The whole area was lined by canals and divided into farms, and the soil was ploughed into ridges ready for cultivation. By now the passengers were preparing to disembark. All the young women had put off their *gargas* and dressed in the ordinary *labis*, the saris worn by women in the central Sudan. Old ladies stuck to their Nubian dress

and remained in their *gargas*. Personally I wished they had all come out of the train in their customary dress, to emphasise the strength of their traditions. By the time the train reached the signal tower, the onlookers were highly impressed by the colossal masses and the surging waves of humanity filling the area around the station buildings. They could assess the tremendous reception awaiting them.

Passing the signal tower, the train slowed down and the driver released long intermittent whistles of greeting to those waiting as it entered the station. The date branches were still decorating the front, indicating the gratitude of the passengers to their date trees, which had given them a living for so long at their old home. A Kassala band played music as the train finally halted.

The crowds had collected from all parts of the scheme to welcome the people for whose resettlement they had been working for years. All the labourers working for the contractors, the Irrigation Department and the Ministry of Agriculture had come in lorries, and all the Ministers and officials were waiting on the platform. The inhabitants of Khashm el Girba village had followed the train. The size of the crowd was really overwhelming. In the distance on the north side thousands had climbed on the roofs of lorries and heavy vehicles, creating towers and columns of human bodies. To the south, thousands of Shukria mounted on camels had formed a long thick wall. They were a magnificent sight, as they shook and flashed their swords in the air with a tumultuous cry of welcome, according to their tradition, while in the middle slogans of welcome were shouted and posters hoisted bearing phrases of greeting such as '*Halatum ahlan wa nazaltum sahan*' and '*Ahlan bikum fi watanikum el jadid*', which means literally, 'You have come to your relatives and you have arrived in a plain', and 'we welcome you in your new home'.

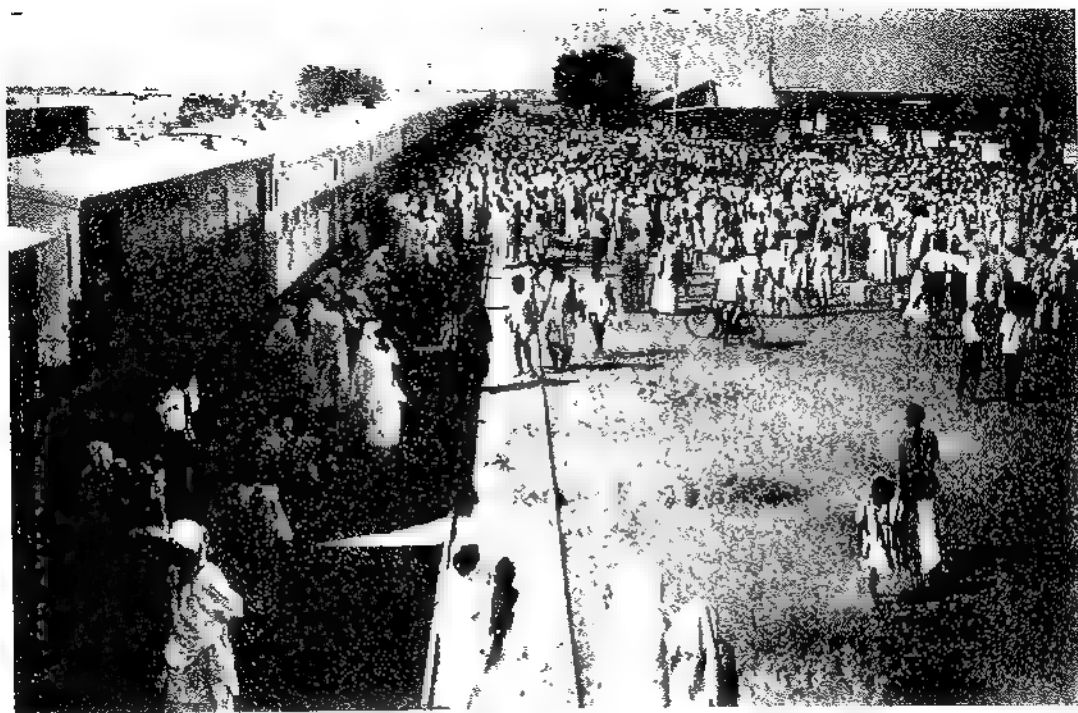
General Hassan Bashir, the ministers and the staff of the Resettlement Commission and the *nazir* of the Shukria came to the train and passed through the coaches greeting the passengers. The sick were taken off first, under the personal supervision of the Minister of Health, to a temporary, but well-equipped small hospital at Khashm el Girba. The rest of the passengers and their baggage were transported in a fleet of cars to their new village.

At Faras West village, Uthman Hussein and his assistants conducted the settlers to their new houses. There was no difficulty in identification, as every house owner found his name written on the gate with the words 'Enter in Peace'. Their first feeling at the standard of the houses was one of intense pleasure. It was best described by Omda Salah and other notables of Faras, when I came to them with the last batch from Sarra. 'At first we couldn't believe that these houses belonged to us. We





20. The Shukria welcome the first batch at Khashm el Girba



21. Khashm el Girba station as the first batch arrived





22. Families entering their new homes at Khashm el Girba for the first time

felt like officials living in government houses.' Inside the houses, so they said afterwards, they entered every room, looking at the walls, the ceiling and the floor. Then they went to look from outside. They were so pleased that women's exclamations of pleasure were heard from every house. Every family found its baggage safely lodged in its own house in addition to a pot of water, a bottle of kerosene and a matchbox. Outside a big bundle of firewood was placed at the corner of the *hosh*. After a short time the veterinary attendants drove the domestic animals into the village and handed them over to their owners. Ali Dongola, the contractor who built the village, was no less generous or pious than the Catholic Torno. He built a mosque in the middle of the village square at his own expense and offered it with a *wakf* of two stalls for meat and vegetables to the inhabitants of his village. They cost him £S 3,200, a generous gift, for which the Faras people were grateful. Sheikh Mohamed Abdu was particularly pleased to find a dignified mosque in which he could practice his Imamate. The consultant engineers had imported large quantities of fresh fruit from Kassala and offered them free to the new settlers. Notables of the neighbouring tribes had killed a large number of bulls and rams in the village to celebrate the occasion, and everybody, Nubian or non-Nubian, was well fed that day.

The village itself was decorated with flags and banners and the central square was festooned with coloured lamps and spotlights lit by Ali Dongola's generator. In the afternoon the official reception started.



23. The Shukria reception

The crowds filled the open spaces and roads of the villages. Drums and *dallukas* were beaten, the band was playing and women were singing. Sheikh Mohamed Hamad Abu Sin, the great *nazir* of the Shukria, had led his tribe to participate in the reception.

General Irwa made a long, comprehensive speech welcoming the Halfa people to their new home and assuring them that all arrangements were made for their immediate settlement and the success of their mission as farmers in the new scheme. He spoke about all the aspects of their new life and encouraged them to work hard and exploit the opportunities open to them. He was followed by the Minister of Communication, Sayed Suliman Hussein, a Nubian, who assured them that the government would continue to give them special attention until they had had time to adapt to their new life. General El Tahir Abd el Rahman el Magboul, the Military Governor of Kassala, and Uthman Hussein also delivered speeches of welcome. After them, the *nazir* of the Shukria made a good address of welcome saying that the Shukria were a courteous and honest tribe and their history was full of acts of good faith to their neighbours. He welcomed the Wadi Halfa people in their new home and said that all the Shukria tribe — the people and their property — were at their disposal. He offered a personal gift of twenty-five milch cows and a large herd of fifty rams to his new guests. In addition the notables of the Shukria and the tribes under their banner had presented a gift of 200 bulls to the Nubians. El Sherif Ibrahim el Hindi had given them three camels as a personal gesture.



24. General Irwa, Minister of the Interior, with Sheikh Mohamed Abdu and Omda Salah, leaders of the first batch, on their arrival in New Halfa

Ali Ahmed Ali made an enthusiastic reply. He said: 'The warm and passionate receptions which we had all along the way from Faras and the ardent welcome we are having now on our arrival have made us forget our grief at losing our home.' He added: 'Halfa inhabitants gave up their land as a sacrifice for the welfare of their mother country. In doing so they claimed no credit from any of their fellow-citizens, and they feel that nobody in the Sudan should owe them any debt of gratitude. They did their duty to their country with satisfaction and resignation, and they are still ready for more sacrifices should the need arise in the future.'

After the official celebration, a gay programme of music and songs, played by a special band of singers and an orchestra sent for the occasion by the Ministry of Information, went on until late at night. Next day the following cabled message was received by the *omda* of Sarra from his colleague Omda Salah of Faras in Khashm el Girba: 'We have arrived in paradise, follow quickly.'

The news of these receptions, which was read in the press and listened to in a special radio programme transmitted direct from new Faras village, stirred deep feelings in the people of the affected area, who realised that although the Sudan tribes were diverse and differed



25. General Irwa at the reception of the first batch

from each other, yet they were united and had warm feelings towards each other. I observed that their morale was high and their misgivings had disappeared.

While all these good receptions were going on in Khashm el Girba, we were busy sending off the baggage of the second batch from Faras, and when the telegram of Omda Salah arrived at Sarra, the second goods train was actually entering the station of Sheikh Omer. On 8 January the last batch of Faras West had left for their new home, in the same way as the others, and were seen off with the same warm farewell and given the same reception as they went. Nadim accompanied them to Khashm el Girba. By this time Hassan Taha and his committee had distributed the houses of new Sarra West village following the map, and the lists were sent to Khashm el Girba by the hand of Nadim. The Commissioner for Compensation had nearly finished his payments to Sarra. The railway staff had moved to Sarra and the evacuation of the baggage of the third batch had already begun. I noticed that the staff were gaining experience and the work proceeded more quickly.

While I was in Sarra I drove two friends to Faras to see it after the evacuation. We strolled along its lanes and entered some houses. All the

china saucers decorating the gates had been pulled out and only their impressions on the mud walls surrounding the gates were left. Except for the dogs which had been left behind, the whole village was silent and dead. Footprints of hyenas were seen all around the village and inside the rooms, showing that a large pack of them had been there the previous night. The whole village looked quite different from the old Faras I had known in the past. It looked sad and its atmosphere was frightening. I remembered its state before the emigration and looked left and right at the places where I used to meet the inhabitants and chat with them, and at the houses once occupied by kind and generous people who used to invite me in. I got so deeply absorbed in my memories that all their phantoms and apparitions were almost visible to me.

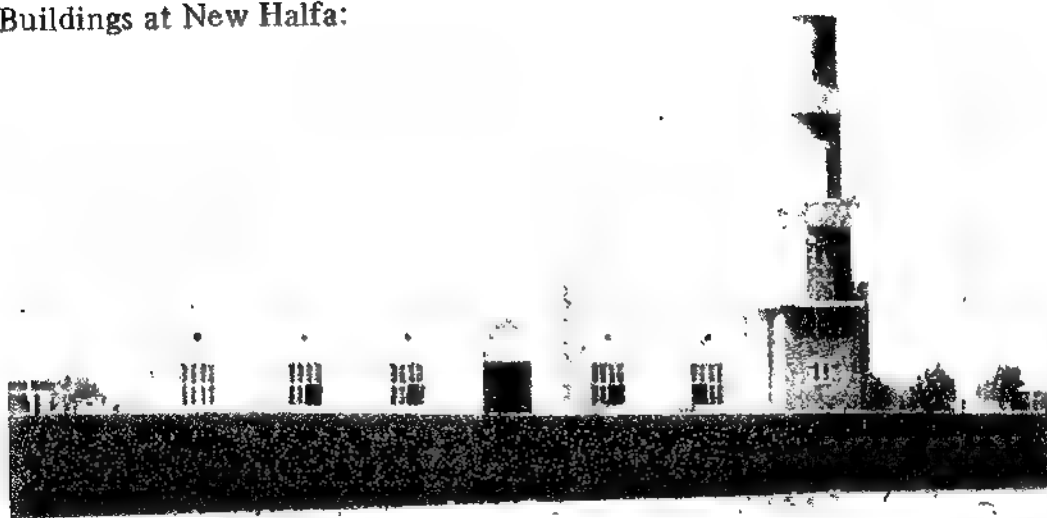
We could not stay long in that ghostly village and when we got in the car, the dogs gathered and ran about us. They did not look hungry and it seemed that they had a good meal on the left-overs of the chickens slaughtered for the journey meal the previous day. When we left, some of them followed us all the way to Sarra; they had sensed in us the human touch, which they did not want to lose. On my return to Halfa town I ordered the police to go to Faras and shoot the rest to save them from going mad with hunger.

The third batch of emigrants was sent safely from Sarra to Khashm el Girba, with the same kind feelings on the part of their relatives on the east bank and kind receptions at all the stations on the way. At station No. 10, at the end of the Atmur desert, one of the pregnant women began labour and gave birth to a boy as they arrived at Abu Hamad. The delivery was easy under the care of the midwife, and the child was healthy. He was the first child to be born on the way and increased the number of passengers by one. To commemorate the occasion, his father, Jamal Salih el Sheikh, named him Hamad.

As the fourth batch would be the last before the month of Ramadan, I decided to accompany them to their new village and see how things stood with the Faras people there. The *omda* of Sarra declined to go with the first batch, preferring to stay and make sure that the last man left the village safely.

On the day of departure, 13 January, I received a telephone call from the police post at Faras telling me that a man had come to them from Ballana, on the Egyptian border, to say that he and thirty others had come from Cairo, intending to join their families before their emigration to New Faras. They had been held up at Ballana for lack of transport and they requested me to make arrangements to bring them to Sarra so that they could catch the last train leaving for their new village at Khashm el Girba. They had no baggage with them other than

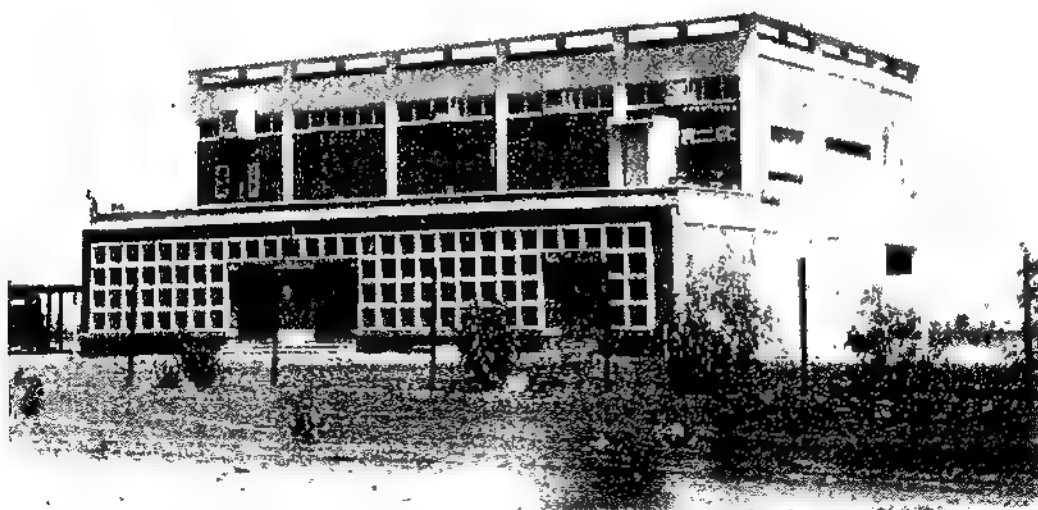
Buildings at New Halfa:



26. The Mosque



27. The Municipality Building



28. The Post Office

their suitcases and a few parcels. I sent the railway and police launches to bring them up before the train left. Fortunately for them they arrived in good time. One of the sailors was telling me that when they passed by their village they looked at it sadly and longingly, cursing President Nasser and President Abboud alike for the disturbance they had caused them.

At 4 p.m. the evacuation of passengers began. There were more evacuees this time than in any previous lot, and with the Faras absentees who had arrived that day, the train was well loaded. Akasha Salhein and a few individuals from other villages asked my permission to accompany the last batch and pay a visit to their colleagues in New Faras East in Khashm el Girba. Their request was granted and they were glad to go with us.

The train left Sarra East station at 6.30 p.m., after sunset. The inhabitants of Sarra East and Dibeira North attended the departure. At Dibeira South and Ashkeit all the inhabitants stood along the railway line swinging their oil lanterns, shouting their farewells — '*Adeela - adeela*', '*Afialogo*' and '*Heir ogo*'. The train left Wadi Halfa at 8 p.m. In Atbara a big crowd came to meet the train. The Nubian community turned out to a man and were allowed to meet their relatives and pass along inside the coaches. Brigadier Mohamed el Mahdi Hamid, Sayed Hassan Girein, Sayed Mohamed el Fadl and Abd el Rahman Mahgoub, the police commandant, were all on the platform when the train arrived. We had a long conversation about all the aspects of the emigration, and I did not forget to convey to them the appreciation of the inhabitants for their kind reception of the previous batches, which had had such a good effect on their morale. I also thanked Mohamed el Fadl for the special arrangements he had made on the emigration trains and the hard work of his staff, under the supervision of Dirdiri. Before the train left a considerable number of gifts had been offered to the passengers.

In Haya, Sheikh Beirag came for the fourth time late at night to meet the train. He delivered his fine speech and offered his gifts of hospitality. Akasha Salhein made a good reply, saying that they had been following with great appreciation the trouble he and his men had taken by coming from remote places to meet the emigration trains, and his unfailing generosity and good feelings to the Wadi Halfa emigrants. He assured him that the good reception given by the inhabitants of Kassala Province was a sign of the happy relations that would prevail between them. At Aroma we found the station swarming with Hadandawa and local inhabitants, led by Nazir Tirik and the notables of his tribe. The council members were led by their executive officer, Abu Jabr el Haj Ajbar, and all the merchants, workers and officials came to



the train; after many speeches, Akasha made a good reply of thanks. Presents of sacks and tins of provisions were taken to the train, as in Kassala. Uthman and Mohamed Mahgoub Hassaballa met the train at Khashm el Girba station. The train arrived at the station near Sarra village at 11.30 a.m. on 15 March. A big tent was put up at the station to which the passengers were led, and refreshments were offered to everyone. All the Faras people and the first batch from Sarra came to the station to meet their relatives. Sheikh Mohamed Abdu was drunk with pleasure, and when he saw me he said in English, 'Hello, how are you?' The energetic Omda Salah had a long talk with me in the station, expressing his gratitude for all we had done for their safe journey and informing me that everybody had been kind and generous to them since their arrival. After the evacuation of the sick to hospital, the passengers were taken by car to their village, and conducted to their new houses.

In the afternoon I went to Faras village to see its inhabitants. We had a mutual longing to see each other, as if we had been parted for a very long time. Their circumstances had changed so much that neither of us could believe that it had all happened within such a short period as ten days. They received me cordially and everyone insisted that I should enter his house and receive hospitality. Eventually I had been into most of the houses and was glad to see them so happy. Sheikh Mohamed Abdu was very proud of his mosque and when he took me to see it he commented jokingly that, as a graduate of El Azhar,\* and the hero of the emigration, he expected President Abboud to appoint him Minister of the Wakfs (minister for religious affairs). I spent a long time most enjoyably with the Faras people, after which I went to Sarra. I found them too in good spirits but busy with the new arrivals. All the Faras women had gone there to help their friends unpack their baggage and set their houses in order. They brought their new guests large quantities of cooked food, which they enjoyed better than the meals offered to them by the resettlement staff, as the former were cooked in the Nubian style.

Omda Salah, who came with me to Sarra, was telling me that when they first came to their village they were surprised to see herds of unclaimed donkeys roaming in the area of the scheme. Later they found out that they had first been introduced there by General Talaat Farid when he was a junior officer in the Second World War. When the Sudan Defence Force were launching their attack to recover Kassala from the Italians in January 1941, Captain Farid bought herds of donkeys, which the army used to drive ahead of the advancing battalions to make sure that the road was free of mines. When Kassala

\* University in Cairo.



was retaken the herds were let loose in the Khashm el Girba area to feed on the Butana grass and drink from the Atbara river. In time their number multiplied. 'Knowing this fact', said Omda Salah, 'everybody drove a donkey to his house for use as a pack animal in his *hawasha* [tenancy].'

After visiting Sarra, I accompanied Uthman Hussein on a tour of the other villages and the town. The rate of building varied from village to village. Some were almost completed, while others were only half finished. I met Abdullahi Shaddad and congratulated him on managing to finish the first two villages in time although they ought to have been finished long before, according to the terms of the contract. He said that the completion dates laid down in the contracts were imposed by the government without previous consultation with the contractors. He added that both the government and the consultants knew quite well that the dates specified were too early, but they insisted on them to put more pressure on the contractors to finish the job as quickly as possible. 'To tell you the truth,' Abdullahi said, 'most of the contractors have done better than we expected. I only need to tell you that nearly all of them imported the machines for making concrete blocks by air from Italy and they worked around the clock on the construction of the houses. Judging from our own experience, the present pace of work is more than satisfactory, and we can assure you that your people will be accommodated safely in their villages before they are caught by the flood of the High Dam lake.' I was comforted by this, and what I saw of the efforts of the contractors confirmed his words.

On our return Uthman and I sat down and reviewed our emigration programme, so that it should conform to the expected completion dates for the villages in Khashm el Girba. I also had a long talk with Allam who spent much time in Khashm el Girba supervising the arrival and settlement of the four batches of emigrants. We surveyed the situation in Wadi Halfa and the resettlement area. Next day, 16 January, was the first day of Ramadan and everybody was fasting. I took a Land-rover and drove to Wad Medani to see my father, whom I had not seen for three years, and who was continuously writing to me in Wadi Halfa urging me to do all I could to help the Nubians in their catastrophe. He had served in Wadi Halfa in the late 1920s when he was a government official, and thought well of the Nubians. I spent half a day in Wad Medani and hurried back to Wadi Halfa via Khartoum.

We had spent a very cold Ramadan, marked by chilly dry weather, the temperature dropping to zero by midnight. (It corresponded with the Coptic month of 'Tuba'). The Nubian carpenters say that during the month of Tuba 'the nails never bend, but they snap.' Whether or not

this was true I did not know, but the weather was so cold that we were often hungry and our skins got shrivelled and rough. When the Eid came everyone had got thin and lost weight. During the Ramadan interlude I reset the final revised programme and published it.

After the celebrations for the Eid festival we continued our emigration programme. On 6 March, the baggage of the first batch of Faras East was loaded. The operation was easy, as this village lay by the railway line, which spared us the trouble of loading the steamer and crossing the Nile. Moreover Faras East was situated on a flat plain, which enabled us to use the heavy trucks. By mid-day the train was loaded and the animals had been driven into their waggons, and at 1 p.m. the train left for Khashm el Girba.

The next day I went to Faras East at 9 a.m., and was surprised to see the station empty and the village deserted. I inquired where the inhabitants were and one of the railwaymen told me they had all gone to the cemetery. I went there too — a rise in the ground separated the cemetery from the village, and when I reached the top, an extraordinary scene came to my view. The inhabitants were carrying branches of date palms, which they had set down by the gravestones, while the religious dance of *zikir* was staged in a wide circle around the grave yard. The tomb of Fekki Uthman, the famous saint of Faras East, was decorated with the green banners of the Khatmia sect, and was surrounded by people reading the religious poems of *El Mulid el Uthmani*.<sup>\*</sup> The scene was deeply moving. They spent two hours paying their respects to the dead, then returned, carrying their broad green banners to the train.

The late Omda Mohamed el Amin was giving me his impressions and appreciation of the good arrangements we had made for their emigration, when suddenly a violently emotional scene took place near us. I saw a young girl in her twenties embracing an old woman and each passionately hugging the other and weeping hot tears. Their wailing and lamentations were deeply touching, and I asked the *omda* the reason for it. I was told that they were mother and daughter; the girl and her husband were living in Adindan village, next to Faras East, on the Egyptian border. As they were emigrating to Kom Ombo, near Aswan, she had come to say good-bye to her father and mother, who were taking the train to Khashm el Girba. They might never see each other again — hence the sad scene. I went to one side and wiped my own tears. This was one of the severe heartbreaks caused by the emigration.

<sup>\*</sup> Narrative of the birth of the Prophet Mohamed written in poetic prose by El Sayed Mohamed Uthman el Mirghani, head of the religious sect.

At 11 a.m. the train left with the first batch from Faras East. The green flags of the Khatmia sect flown through the coach windows made the sight of the train very impressive.

The departure of the second batch from Faras East had to be delayed until their houses were ready. The reader may remember that this village was built by Turriff. When the firm finally withdrew, some of the houses were left without surrounding walls and water closets. Their completion was assigned to the Ministry of Works, who took the job in hand. I understood from Uthman that the houses would be ready for the second batch from Faras within ten days. It was for this reason that I had put El Hasa village after the first batch of Faras East in the published programme. When the railway officials went to El Hasa village to collect the baggage for loading the inhabitants refused, claiming that they would submit a petition to me on the same day containing certain conditions, and that if their demands were not met they would refuse to emigrate. Since we had started the evacuation of the first batch of Faras East, rumours were circulating that the situation in El Hasa village was uneasy and that some suspicious actions had taken place, aimed at obstructing the emigration. The background to this situation was as follows.

In mid-September 1963, it came to my notice that the inhabitants were preparing their land for the winter rotation. Evidently, the continuous changes in the target date for emigration and the lagging rate of building in Khashm el Girba had made them inclined to believe that the emigration would not start before April. I therefore drew the Commission's attention to this activity, pointing out its undesirable effects at the time of the evacuation, if it were allowed to continue. The inhabitants would feel very reluctant to leave their cultivation when it had reached a promising state and go to Khashm el Girba. Eventually, I called for a clear-cut decision, prohibiting all the inhabitants from sowing their winter rotation. The Commission, feeling that my suggestion involved some commitment on the part of the authorities, and also perhaps because they had their own doubts at that time about the ability of the contractors to complete the villages in time, had directed me to advise the inhabitants that as long as the emigration was due to start in the winter, they should not commit themselves to cultivating the winter rotation. Anybody not wishing to abide by this advice, should realise the risk that he might have to leave the area before the harvest season. The reader will observe that, in spite of the loose terminology of this official advice, the government could hardly have escaped commitment if the emigration were delayed until April, assuming that the inhabitants abided by it. Personally I felt that a straightforward prohibition might have been better than leaving the

door half open for trouble-makers, as actually happened. However, feeling I was placing my own responsibility on the shoulders of others, I drafted the notice and published it in our daily Bulletin. The reaction of the inhabitants was more or less favourable. All the villages abandoned their winter rotation, except El Hasa, Angash and Degheim.

The second point related to the manner of registration and the right of use by the Nubians of the freehold land in Khashm el Girba. On his memorable visit to Wadi Halfa, President Abboud had promised that all freehold land belonging to the inhabitants of the affected area would be registered as such in their new home. The Nubians themselves had never asked for cash compensation for their land, but were keen to have their freeholds, in order to substantiate their rights to the land in their new country. The Commission, though agreeing to this in principle, had for some reason decided that all freehold land, though it was to be registered in the names of the owners, should nevertheless be included in the scheme area at an annual rent of four shillings per *feddan*, as in the case of the Gezira. This arrangement was not acceptable to the Nubians, who did not like to see their freehold land dissipated in the scheme area at such a low rent, without the right to acquire and use it if they felt that the tenancy agreement of the scheme was unacceptable. The big landlords, in particular, were not likely to be content with a single *hawasha* in return for their big estates. Moreover the Nubians felt that the decision did not conform to their aspirations or the spirit of Abboud's promise. The sense of grievance and the complaints were general. '*Wa amaltulna eih fi el aradi el milk?*' ('What have you decided about our freehold land?') was a common question put to all senior officials visiting Wadi Halfa.

When Allam first came on a visit to Wadi Halfa we had a long discussion on the subject, and I felt that he was quite sympathetic to the Nubian point of view. He promised that he would refer the matter back to the Commission at the first opportunity and try to seek redress.

The reader should also bear in mind that the Commission had decided that each family should be leased a garden plot of one *feddan*, for growing fruit and vegetables, to be allocated around the villages. The total area of these plots came to about 8000 *feddans*, which was set aside from the scheme area.

To return to El Hasa, we find that their freeholding of land was too small to justify a claim, but their real grievance was motivated by their reluctance to abandon their wheat, which was just ripening. Knowing that this by itself would be a weak case, they began to concoct other claims, in the hope of causing a delay which would enable them to gather their harvest before leaving their village. This had encouraged the aggrieved landowners to join the El Hasa people and include their

claims in the petition. On the other hand, the anti-Khashm el Girba elements had been encouraged by the new development in the situation, and tried to join forces with the El Hasa people; but the latter had given them the cold shoulder, saying that they were not opposing the emigration, and that their differences with the government were aimed at improving matters there.

On 8 March I received a deputation from El Hasa, led by Mohi el Din el Saigh and the late Uthman Abu el Rish. The petition they submitted to me contained the following five demands: first, that the emigration of their village should be delayed until they could harvest their winter crop; secondly, that the new houses at Khashm el Girba should be guaranteed for at least fifteen years, during which the government should be under an obligation to maintain them and repair any damage that might occur; thirdly, that freehold land should be separated from the *hawasha* area and registered outside the scheme; fourthly, that the government should also guarantee that the remainder of the cash compensation was in safe hands, and that it should be paid to them the moment they arrived at their new home; and finally, that the *hawashas* should be granted to them on 99-year tenancy leases.

During my tentative discussions with them I saw that they were stubborn and could not be persuaded. I therefore promised to study their petition and discuss it with the inhabitants on the visit to El Hasa which I intended to make on the next day. When they left I telephoned Allam and informed him of the situation, saying that I would try to persuade them to move, though their attitude made me pessimistic. He agreed, and asked me to contact him on my return from the village.

I have already explained the reasons behind the first and third demands. The second demand reflected their misgivings about the strength of buildings in Khashm el Girba. The haste with which the building programme had been executed was the reason for their fears. The fourth demand was a mere echo of a rumour of that time that the economic situation of the country was unsound. Later on, when they received their payments in Khashm el Girba, they realised that the rumour was unfounded. The fifth demand was a mere folly, without precedent in the land administration of the Sudan. I prepared my answers accordingly.

Next day, accompanied by Nadim and Mohamed Fadlalla, I went to El Hasa. The outskirts of the village were covered with cultivation and were beautifully green. The wheat, in particular, was flourishing, and promised a good crop. The three of us felt sympathetic towards the first item of the El Hasa claim; if we had been in their place we would certainly have acted in the same way. When we got to the village we found a big gathering waiting for us. They were not as open or cordial

as I had known them before, yet they were not hostile. From their attitude I gathered that they did not expect good news. So I explained all the points regarding the registration of freehold land in the scheme, quoting the Gezira and Managil schemes as examples. As for their winter crop, I pointed out that they had been warned that the emigration would start in the winter and had been advised not to sow the winter rotation. Furthermore I assured them of the good quality of the buildings, in spite of their rapid completion. 'Your compensation is in safe hands, and the government treasury has already set aside the rest of your cash entitlement,' I said. The last demand was condemned as unreasonable and unprecedented. When I finished, I noticed that they looked at me as if disappointed. The Omda El Saigh, in excited tones, informed me that if their claims were not met they would not emigrate. His reply was greeted with approval from the gathering. I made it clear that if they wanted a favourable response from the government their demands must be reasonable. I advised them not to be hasty in coming to such grave conclusions or adopt such a dictatorial manner, and that if they insisted on not going to Khashm el Girba, their village there would be allotted to other people who were ready to go. Lastly I tried to calm them by saying that I would inform Khartoum of the situation, and that the final decision rested with the government.

On my return I told Allam of the situation. He said he had already brought the matter to the notice of the Ministerial Committee, with a recommendation that the freehold land should be separated from the scheme area. But in the circumstances, he added that all the families would forfeit their garden plots, which would be amalgamated in the *milk*, i.e. freehold. He would come to Wadi Halfa next day for further discussions with the inhabitants, in an attempt to convince them. We agreed that instead of facing a disorderly crowd like the one I met that morning, I would summon the leading men of El Hasa village to meet him in my office.

At the meeting next day he conveyed to them the following decisions. First, the government had responded to their demand regarding the separation of the freehold land from the *hawasha* areas, but it would be carried out at the expense of the garden plots which had previously been allocated to the families. The total area involved in the freehold holdings was estimated at 30,000 *feddans*, to compensate for the 15,000 *feddans* of freehold land in Wadi Halfa, at the rate of two to one previously agreed by the government. Secondly, regarding their compensation, they could rest assured that this would be paid on their arrival at Khashm el Girba. Thirdly, the houses were built of first-class materials, and conformed to the standard and plans approved by the technical department; the contractors were supervised by

consultant engineers specially appointed by the government for that purpose. To ask for a fifteen-year guarantee was an absurd claim, which the government found it quite impossible to accede to. Fourthly, their demand for a 99-year lease for the *hawashas* was absurd. The government felt that it had fulfilled its obligation by setting aside a quarter of the whole scheme area for their resettlement, but in no case should they expect different treatment from the rest of the citizens of the Sudan regarding tenancy agreements. Fifthly, the Government had already warned them not to plant the winter rotation and made it clear that those who refused to abide by that advice would have to risk leaving the area before the harvest. Finally, Allam gave them one week to reconsider their situation, after which they would be left to stay where they pleased if they refused to go; their new village would be given to other people.

After hearing these decisions, the deputation left the office, still apparently dissatisfied. Allam returned to Khartoum next day.

Two days later, Ali Ahmed Ali and Mohi el Din Abu el Rish, the younger brother of Uthman, came to my office and informed me that they had had a discussion with El Hasa people, and had made some progress. They had abandoned their other claims but were greatly concerned about their winter crop. I was relieved to hear this, and told them that I had thought of an alternative solution to their crop problem, which I would like to discuss with them at their village that afternoon. When I went to El Hasa I found the people quite agreeable and co-operative. I gave them two alternative suggestions for salvaging their crop. They should either leave twenty men behind to attend the cultivation and harvest the crop, or, if they preferred, I would issue return tickets for twenty of them so that they could come back to the village after they had settled their families, to see to the cultivation and collect the harvest. I further promised them that in either case I would arrange for the men, with their crop, to leave by the first train after the harvest for their new village in Khashm el Girba. They accepted the second alternative with pleasure. Concluding this happy meeting, they requested that the railway staff come to their village and take their baggage.

On 13 March, one week after the start of their resistance, the first cargo train left with their baggage for Khashm el Girba. The passenger train followed next day, and on 17 March the last batch from El Hasa left for their new village. The United Nations representative Mr. Arniel, whose attention had been drawn to the incident, paid his first visit to Wadi Halfa, and saw the arrangements we had made for the emigration, and was very impressed.

After El Hasa, the second batch from Faras East left on 20 March.



The operation went on without a hitch until the evacuation of the first and second phases was complete. It would bore the reader to record every detail, but there were some interesting incidents which deserve to be recorded.

After the experience of El Hasa I revised the programme of the emigration, with a view to delaying the departure of Angash and Degheim villages, to enable them to collect their harvest before leaving. A day before the departure of the first batch from Argin, my office messenger, who was from that village, related to me that they had woken that morning to find the village crowded with returning absentees, who had arrived in the steamer the night before. Many of them, he said, had long been given up for dead, so that when their relatives saw them, it was as if they had risen from their graves. Some people became really frightened. One absentee who had left his wife forty years before with a male infant in her arms, was met at the station by his grandson, who was a student at the secondary school.

When the Basalwa left, it was noticed that all the train coaches were stuffed with cages of pigeons, cygnets and rabbits. They seemed to have taken all their poultry with them, and with their departure all the swarms of pigeons had disappeared from the sky of the town.

By the end of June all the northern villages had emigrated, except for one batch in Sarra East whose village in Khashm el Girba had not been completed. They were isolated, without any transport facilities for their daily shopping. I allotted them a car for that purpose, and Nadim and I kept visiting them to show that they were not forgotten. At first I was afraid they might be attacked by the hungry hyenas which abounded in that area, and which had lost all the kitchen refuse of the villages which had already emigrated, on which they used to feed. But they had no such complaint.

On 30 May the last batch from Argin left, leaving a solitary man behind, Salih Uthman. He had no house and was living in a thatched hut. All attempts to persuade him to emigrate with his fellow-villagers had failed and he insisted on remaining alone in the village until it was submerged. Later, the residents of Degheim persuaded him to cross the river and live with them by the shore of the lake.

Sheikh Mohamed Ahmed Awad and his family remained alone in Dibeira, as did the famous Ayoub family who stayed in Ashkeit until their houses were flooded. Ahmed Mohamed Awad, a schoolmaster, and Mohamed Taha Ayoub, who was working in the Railway Department in Atbara, both went on leave to come to Wadi Halfa and rescue their families. They could manage it only by boat, as the road had by then been flooded. They remained with the Degheim residents.

When the last batch from the west bank left Kunuz village, near the



ancient city of Buhen, they left a big herd of dogs behind. As the police were short of ammunition at that time, these creatures stayed for days and got very hungry. Their barking, heard across the river, was pathetic. One day while I was standing on the river bank by the Nile Hotel I spotted several of them swimming across the river to the east bank, in search of food. No doubt the sight of people moving and the city lights by night on the east bank had tempted them to cross the river and join the remaining human community. An urgent telegram was now sent to the Commandant of Police in Atbara to expedite a consignment of cartridges.

In May a locomotive came off the rails near the signal tower of Angash station and blocked the railway, thus threatening a delay in the emigration. There was no time to wait for the arrival of the rescue cranes from Atbara, and the resourceful El Dirdiri built a loop line around the grounded engine. The trains were able to resume their journey after only four hours' delay. Similar action was taken in August, when three empty cargo wagons were derailed at station No. 2 in the Atmur desert.

## AFTER THE EMIGRATION IN WADI HALFA AND KHASHM EL GIRBA

Mohamed Uthman Abd el Rahman and Akasha Salhein started pulling down what could be salvaged from the deserted villages immediately after their evacuation. The roof rafters, doors and windows were all dismantled and transported to a depot near the airport. Their activity truly made these villages look as if disaster had struck them. I found Faras East in no better state than the ruins of the ancient church to the north of it.

A team of engineers and workers sent by the Post Department had pulled down all the telephone poles along the Halfa-Faras line and rolled the wires onto giant reels. All this material was stored in an open space near the airport, to be transported to Khartoum. The Public Works Department had also begun dismantling the water tanks in the town and Degheim village, stripping them into sections and loading them into railway waggons. I reflected how much easier it was to demolish than to build. A gang of Hadandawa men, imported from Kassala Province, were engaged in digging out the main water pipe line and despatching the salvage material to the airport. It was interesting to see the Hadandawa men, who loved the taste of dates, coming to Wadi Halfa when the crop was just ripe. In their free time many of them could be seen stoning the bunches and collecting the dates.

The same department had also sent an engineer, Hamid Abd el Halim, to salvage the electric plant and equipment before the flood. Instead of starting with the deserted quarters of the town, he first cut off the cable connecting my own house, then proceeding to the houses inhabited by officials. The weather was at its greatest heat at that time and we all missed the blessings of electric fans and refrigerators. The water supply too was cut off, but Hassan Taha was kind enough to issue us with a supply of alum for the elimination of silt from the Nile water, which thus made it usable for drinking and washing. All the officials

had bought *ginawi* jars\* and pots for cooling the water, and Sudan Railways kindly sent us a regular supply of ice from their factory at Atbara by the returning trains.

A big gang was sent to dismantle Faras line by the engineering section of Sudan Railways. They started in July, taking up all the rail sections and loading them onto special waggons, which were despatched to Atbara. They then began to dismantle the wide workshop sheds which had been built at the time of Khedive Ismail, a century ago. Surprisingly, all the trusses and galvanised sheeting were found to be intact for re-use. The joinery and the furniture of the Nile Hotel were sent to Atbara.

By the end of August that beautiful and lively town, Wadi Halfa, was deserted and in ruins. All doors and windows had been pulled out and some of the roofs were demolished to salvage the rafters. The town looked gloomy and dismal, as if it had been ruined for ages. I walked through its empty streets with a deep feeling of sadness, as if all the inhabitants with whom we had been living until yesterday had all perished and gone for ever. The magnificent two-storey houses of Ali Hasaballa Lashin, Birbis, Abdu Ahmed Suliman and Shorbagi Adam Hanafi were stripped of all their splendour, with all their doors and windows gouged out.

While all this damage and destruction went on in Wadi Halfa, building proceeded at full speed in Khashm el Girba. The villages were being completed and taken over one after the other according to a timetable compatible with our emigration programme. All the batches of emigrants were safely settled in their new villages and their *hawashas* were handed to them. The only hitch occurred on 22 May, when the third batch from Argin arrived to find their houses still being finished off. They stayed for a week with the second batch, then moved into their new houses. This short inconvenience was accepted in a good spirit by both hosts and guests.

In June a violent sandstorm (*haboob*) struck the northern section of the resettlement area. The storm came from the direction of Gash Die in the north, blowing at high speed like a hurricane, and carrying with it heavy clouds of fine sand and dust. It traversed village No. 22 (Degheim), built by contractor Gabir Abu el Izz, blowing off the roofs of houses and causing varying degrees of damage to the buildings. The roof sheetings and truss beams were flung across the roads and house yards and the concrete slabs of the boundary walls were scattered haphazard in front of the houses. In all seventy-two houses were

\* Jars, normally white, made at Gina in Egypt, which is famous for their export.

affected. To the Nubians, who were not accustomed to such harsh weather and saw the roof sheeting of their houses flying about like paper, the experience was alarming. Fortunately the only injuries were to two persons who suffered slight wounds, but the inhabitants claimed that their loss in livestock was high.

A board of inquiry was set up, including technicians, to investigate why the storm had caused so much damage to the buildings. The board made a thorough inspection of the damaged houses and concluded that, apart from the wind being exceptionally violent, the roof trusses were weakly tied to the walls and it appeared that the specifications of the construction plan made no allowance for a safety margin sufficient to resist the pressure of such a violent storm. The columns holding the concrete slabs of the boundary walls were built on shallow foundations which had given way. It was also discovered many householders had left the windows facing the current wide open, while those at the rear were kept closed. The wind blew into the rooms and, finding no outlet, had lifted off the roofs.

The consultant engineers revised the construction plan to overcome these drawbacks and the contractor reinforced all the roof joints and the foundations of the boundary wall columns. The Nubians were also advised to keep their windows closed in case of violent winds.

Hardly had the situation in Village No. 22 been rectified when, on one evening early in August, the resettlement area was struck by a terrific thunderstorm. The rain poured down in sheets, with many flashes of lightning and thunderclaps. To the Nubians, who had an ingrained fear of rain and thunder, this was a terrible experience. I heard that some of them had spent the night lying under their beds in sheer terror and that one woman was so frightened that she locked her two children in a cupboard. To make matters worse, when they awoke next morning they found the whole area submerged in rain water. The surrounding canals had caused water-logging and the sodden muddy soil had brought all traffic to a standstill.

The muddy state of the area after the storm caused grave difficulties for Uthman Hussein. Finding it impossible to use motor trucks for the transport of baggage and passengers, he arranged for the job to be done by a fleet of tractors. The railway stations too were under water. The porters had to wade knee-deep through water to reach the cargo trains. Even the tractors proved useless. Many of them got stuck, while the baggage being carried by others was soaked. Uthman decided to suspend the unloading until the situation was better. With all these difficulties mounting in the resettlement area, the position was made worse by part of the railway line at El Shideyab near Haya and in the Gash Die near Aroma being washed away. Heavy rain which had fallen

in the eastern sector of Aroma district had collected in a torrential stream, which had effectively cut the railway line at the Gash Die, and racing west caused serious damage to the embankment of the railway line at Shideyab, leaving a long section of rail hanging in the air. All our emigration trains had piled up in Khashm el Girba loaded with people and baggage, waiting for the rain water to dry out.

Sudan Railways, who were running their wagons according to a strict timetable, were concerned at the long delay at Khashm el Girba. They sent an angry telegram to the Commissioner for Resettlement, to the effect that if the eighty-four wagons detained were not emptied and sent back to Wadi Halfa without delay, they would suspend the emigration programme until after the rains. Uthman replied that they were making every effort to drain the stations but it would take several days to empty and release the trains. Uthman told me by telephone that their position was precarious. All the passengers had been held up in the trains for days and an old sick passenger had died. Everything depended on the success of their efforts to clear the station of water and no more rain falling in the next two days. Evidently Sudan Railways, too, were in deep water. Most of their wagons were stranded at Port Sudan because of the flooding of the railway line, and they had no spare wagons to send us. Eventually, however, they suggested to the Commission that the emigration should be postponed until after the rains, i.e. in mid-September. This news caused me real anxiety as the level of the Nile had already started to rise. On 20 August I sent a telegram to the Commission and Uthman Hussein:

'A sudden rise in the level of the Nile has been noticed here. If it continues at this rate the water will soon flood the lower parts of Halfa town. The villages of Ashkeit and Dibeira will soon be cut off as the first spill-over will block the only road at Jebel Sahaba. Any difficulties that could face the emigrants at Khashm el Girba will be easier than the approaching hazards of the flood.'

After sending this telegram, I had a long conversation with Allam giving him a comprehensive briefing on the creeping danger to which the inhabitants would be exposed if the Commission decided to comply with the request of the Railway Department. Knowing the area, Allam was well aware of the reasons behind my solicitations. He therefore put all my points before the Ministerial Committee, who then instructed Sudan Railways to comply with our request whatever the circumstances. On 23 August the last batch from Ashkeit had left for Khashm el Girba, followed by the remaining emigrants from Dibeira. Then came the remaining batches from the town, and from Fargei, Degheim and Magarab villages. On 20 September the last batch left the area, and the emigration of the first and second phases came to a close.

A total of 41,000 inhabitants had left, accompanied by 365,142 pieces of baggage of various sizes and 16,000 head of livestock. We lost four passengers on the way, one of them Ali Mohamed Adam of Dibeira. He had been suffering from throat cancer and had died at Abu Hamad. Another died at Musmar station, and the remaining two in the detained trains at Khashm el Girba. On the brighter side, Hamad had been the first of three babies born on the train.

Since 20 August there had been a steady rise in the Nile level. The flood did not come in spates as usual, but in a continuous and regular rise. By the end of August the first flush of the annual flood had arrived, turning the colour of water a muddy brown. This, coupled with the backwash from downstream, increased the rate of rise and slowed the current. The banks were full to the brim and the flood was expected to overflow at any time. Temporary precautionary measures were taken to strengthen the weak spots of the embankment opposite the market where the shops of the resident traders were still full of goods, and alongside the railway station, where evacuation of materials and baggage still continued.

On 1 September at 1 a.m., the Nile overflowed at an unexpected spot, the entrance to the harbour. It submerged the railway station and the flood crept as far as the hospital. This was the start of the deluge. We woke up early in the morning to find the station yard and all the area south of it covered with water, making a mess of all the baggage lying near the platform. Five cargo wagons were trapped and half a mile of the railway track was submerged. No locomotive dared go to their rescue, for fear that the wet line would sink under its weight. Instead a team of porters pushed the wagons to dry ground. Empty naphtha drums were tied together and timber boards secured to them. This was used as a raft to float the soaked baggage to a dry place. While we were all in the station trying to save as much as we could, at 1.30 p.m. the Nile broke its banks at a vulnerable spot opposite Tawfikia mosque, encircling a big section of the market area. We recruited all the remaining manpower available to move goods out of the shops, some of which started to collapse. I saw a building fall down only twenty metres from my car, and hurried up and drove it to safety. In the afternoon the embankment at El Geiger, opposite the Sirdaria buildings, collapsed, allowing the water to enter its vacant premises and turn the low-lying area west of the railway workshops into a wide pool. South of my house the flood rushed through the garden of the dock manager's house and surrounded the Ismaili mosque, thus isolating the house of the airport manager and the dock engineer next-door to mine. The Nile Hotel stood half sunk in water like the temple of Philae at Aswan. In Degheim village about thirty houses had collapsed, and I sent a rescue party of policemen with cars to help with the removal of baggage.



29. Wadi Halfa Hospital under water



30. The water reaches Tawfikia Mosque, Wadi Halfa



31. The Commissioner's house collapsing as the waters rise



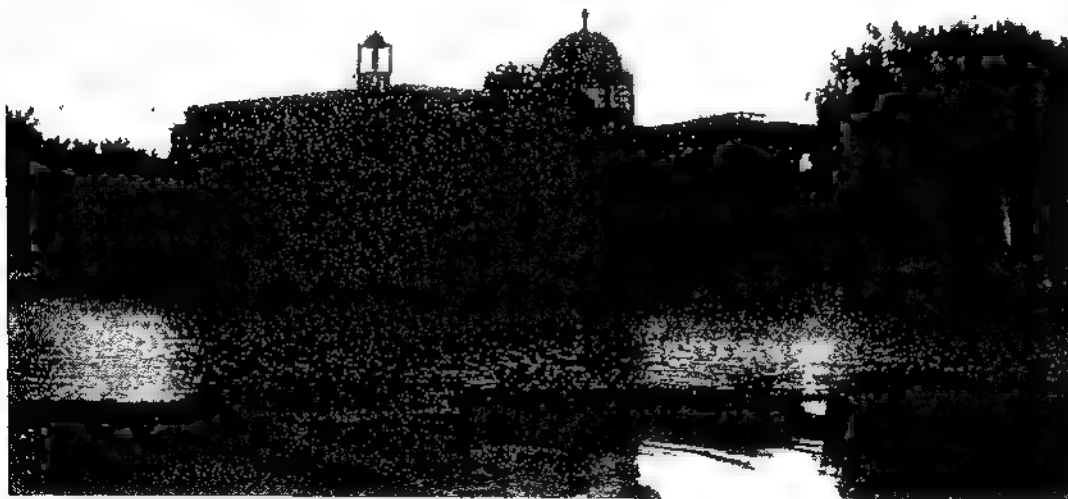
32. Abbasia flooded



In the evening we launched a hurried operation for the evacuation of baggage in the officials' quarters and government offices. All the domestic baggage and the personal effects were removed to the airport and lay in an open space, guarded by the servants. Next day I loaded my own baggage onto two railway wagons, leaving behind only the most essential articles.

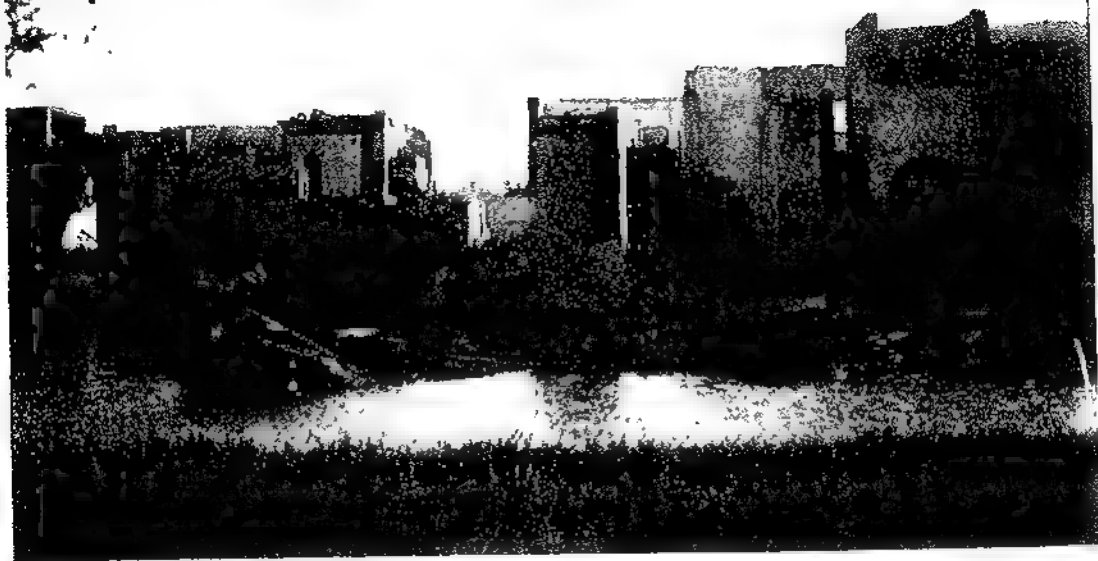
The water continued to rise gradually. The whole market was submerged and the water was encroaching on the residential area at Tawfikia and Abbasia. Most of the shops had crumbled, and those built of mud bricks had melted away in the water and completely disappeared. By 9 o'clock on 2 September, the water had reached the houses of Barbis and Abdu Ahmed Suliman, thus covering the main open space of the town. At El Tawfikia the water entered through the road between the mosque and the shop of Gellatly Hankey, and from there it ran north, submerging the whole quarter as far as the club. The hospital and *merkaz* buildings were encircled and a big section of the hospital had collapsed. At El Geiger the water had rushed westward across the road leading to the Nile Hotel, carrying with it many scorpions and reptiles; it submerged all the agricultural scheme of Rashid and reached the main tarmac road of the town. The railway line connecting the workshops with Angash station was submerged, isolating the workshops where evacuation of salvage material was still in progress. A joint line connecting the workshops with the main line to Angash was built on the same day, and all the salvage was cleared before sunset. The Post and Telegraph Department had finally moved all its equipment to the airport, thus closing the office of old Wadi Halfa town for good. Before their departure I bought four sets of stamps, stuck them on envelopes and had them stamped with that memorable date as a souvenir.

At noon I went to the airport to see our new place of settlement. The house baggage of the officials had been piled up carelessly in the open space north of the airport buildings. The Post and Telegraph Department had occupied the east wing and were busy connecting their exchange with the main telephone line. On returning to my house I found the water seeping into my garden from the Sirdaria building, and the level of the Nile had nearly reached the parapet of the embankment. Rats living in our storeroom were all coming out of their holes, carrying their young between their teeth and running outside the house to higher ground. It seemed that they sensed the approaching danger by instinct. While I wondered at this natural phenomenon, I suddenly heard a sound like a clap of thunder from the direction of the Sirdaria. I could see a cloud of dust bursting in the air — the whole building had fallen down. We were busy that day clearing out all the office equipment and taking it to the airport.



33. The Ismaili Mosque, Wadi Halfa, collapsing

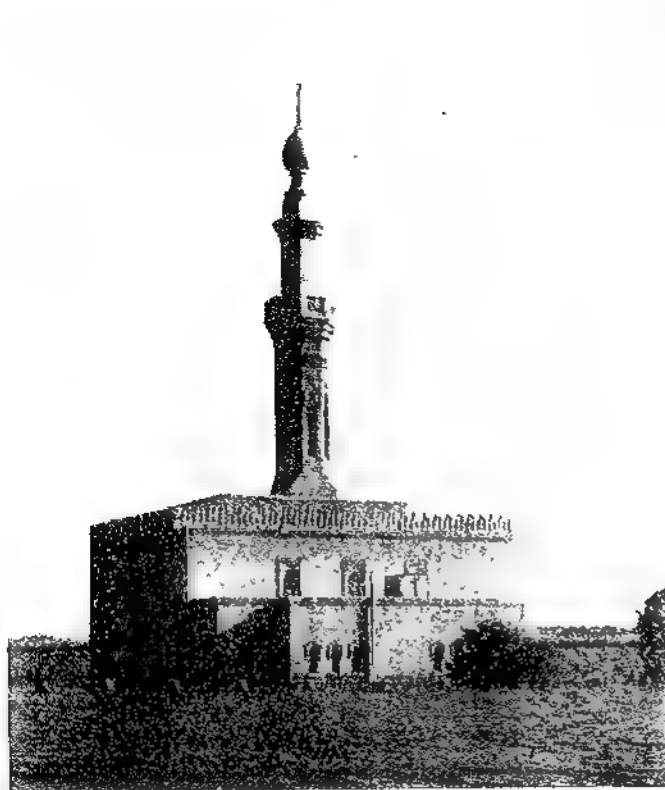
When I returned to my house late at night, my bed was damp. I was very tired and in need of rest, but the likelihood of the water entering my house while I was asleep disturbed me. As I had no energy left to leave for the airport that night, I decided to run the risk of spending the night at home. I therefore left the edge of my bedsheet dangling on the ground so that if the water came, it would get wet and awaken me. I slept soundly. I woke early in the morning to find the Nile on a level with the edge of the parapet. More water had entered my garden from the direction of the Sirdaria. I went out to look at the surrounding area. The dockyard manager's house had fallen and nothing remained above the ground. The Ismaili mosque had a wide crack, scarring the building from roof to foundation. In the town, the hospital building was now rubble, while part had disappeared altogether. The medical officer's house had completely vanished; only a grove of palm trees sticking out of water remained to show where it had been. The market area was in the middle of a wide pool dotted with islands consisting of heaps of the debris of the fallen shops. The western part of the Tawfikia started to collapse. I returned to my house, and with my servant took the rest of my baggage and my dog to the airport, leaving Akasha Salhein trying to salvage as much as he could from the building before the water entered. On my arrival at the airport I directed my servant to chain the dog to a pole, fearing that it might return to the house, which was expected to collapse at any time. As a matter of fact, when the dog was tied up, I felt that I needed a chain too. I could not stop myself from going into the town continually to see what was happening. I only went to the



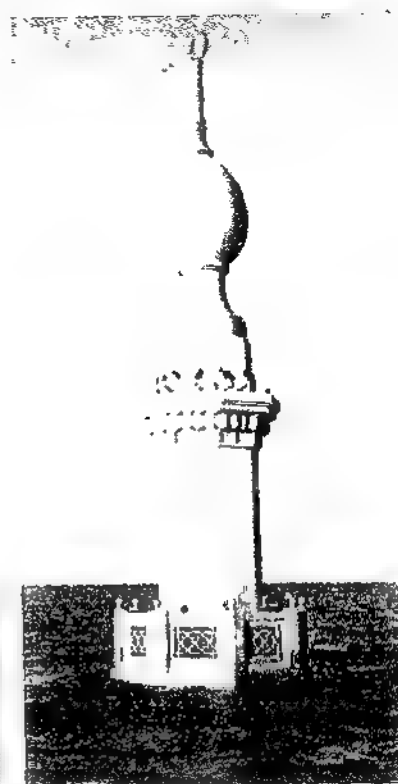
34 and 35. Tawfikia in ruins



36. Date plantation submerged



37. El Hussein Mosque at Degheim at the start of the flood



38. El Hussein Mosque in 1966

airport to come back to the town again. In the afternoon I took my Rolleiflex equipped with a reversal reel and, accompanied by Nadim, went to the town to take some colour slides. At El Geiger part of the Ismaili mosque had collapsed; the only trace of the dockyard manager's house was its corrugated iron roof floating on its timber trusses over the site of building. The water had already entered the rooms of my house and flooded the garden. I noticed that shrubs which had been dying for lack of water since the water supply was cut, had freshened up and their curly leaves and drooping branches had straightened. But the water that brought them to life again would soon make them wither and decay. Then we passed the officials' quarters — most of the houses had fallen down. We followed the water's edge, passing under the walls of the houses of El Abbasia till we entered the north side of El Tawfikia through the football stadium and the municipal garden. By that time the water had reached the police station and filled the low-lying area south of the garden. Here we saw a shocking sight: that beautiful quarter with its magnificent two-storeyed houses had been turned to ruins. We roamed the streets walking over rubble and taking some pictures. The walls were even now still falling, and every moment we were distracted by the dismal roar of the falling buildings, followed by clouds and splashing of water. We could not go far, and retraced our steps back to the club building which was on higher ground. From there we could see the partly collapsed red brick two-storeyed house of the family of Sherif Daud. The house of Yaghmur was still intact though encircled with flood water. The view of El Tawfikia from the club aroused in us many sad thoughts. It was the beginning of the end of Wadi Halfa — an end that had not come with a bang but by the creeping rise of the blessed waters of the Nile, the sole life-giver, the source of prosperity and the origin of existence of the area and its people.

On the 5th nothing remained of El Tawfikia except for the mosque and its stout minaret. The water submerged the stadium, and its northern wall had fallen. All the officials' quarters were now part of the river. In Dabarosa the houses were collapsing and the mud walls were melting like biscuits. My house had crumbled after a crack split it open right up the centre. The pillars of the ground floor leaned sideways and the roof hung askew. The sight of it revived the memory of the last six years, during which I had lived there happily.

The destruction in the town and the northern villages went on day and night till my final departure on 17 September, on transfer to Khartoum as Secretary of a new National Commission for the Affairs of the Southern Sudan. When I left, only the higher places of Abbasia, Dabarosa and Tippetts quarters had not been reached by the water. Most of the villages were devastated by the flood and the main road to Faras was blocked at Jebel Sahaba.

While the emigration was being interrupted by the heavy rains in Khashm el Girba, our fleet of steamers had finally left Wadi Halfa for the south on 11 August. In April the dockyard engineers had examined all the vessels in the fleet, to see whether they could undertake the dangerous trip, and decided that some should be superannuated on grounds of old age, and disposed of locally – notably s.s. *Sudan*, which had been introduced by Thomas Cook and Son, but laid up many years ago. Used as an annexe to the Nile Hotel, it was kept moored by the river bank adjacent to the Hotel. It was now demolished and sold for scrap. Another small steamer, s.s. *El Gamar* ('Ibis' or 'The Moon') had been used by Lord Kitchener during the years of preparation for the reconquest of the Sudan. This vessel was sold to the sons of Abd el Ghani Musa, 'Barbis Brothers', who sent it to Aswan, had it refitted with a new engine and equipment and used it on the navigation service between Halfa and Aswan after the evacuation of our fleet. Seven barges were boarded up, condemned and sold as scrap. The floating dock was dismantled and sent by train to Khartoum North.

The steamers *El Mirriekh* ('Mars') and *Nigm el Gotbi* ('Pole Star') and the powerful tug *El Nuba* were considered capable of making the trip south, where they would do service on the upper Nile, together with *El Thoraya*.

The crossing of the cataracts was master-minded by the engineer Ibrahim Medani. The steamers passed through the gorges in line ahead following each other at short intervals, with the tug *El Nuba* in the rear. It was Ibrahim's plan that this method should constrain the rushing waters in the gorges, raising their level and so slowing down the current. This plan worked successfully. Late in August at Abka village I saw the giant electric winch at work pulling *El Mirriekh* through El Bab el Kabir. In spite of all the power used, it took them weeks to reach calm water. The powerful *El Nuba* at the rear managed without any help. When the flotilla was upstream of the Second Cataract, the winch was dismantled and taken on board to Khartoum. The rest of this trip passed without mishap.

## EVACUATING THE ILLUSTRIOUS DEAD

During those busy days, as we were finishing the emigration of the living, our attention was diverted to the evacuation of the dead, in particular the bodies of Amir Uthman Digna and Sidi Ibrahim el Mirghani. The proposal to exhume the body of Uthman Digna and rebury him somewhere in the east was first made in 1958, when I arrived at Wadi Halfa, the place where he spent his years of captivity until his death.

The reader of the history of the Mahdiya cannot fail to observe that the events of that era were marked by continuous battles in which the Sudanese showed themselves to be great and brave warriors. There were certain warriors whose achievements aroused the admiration of all writers. One of them was Emir Uthman Digna, the 'Prince of the East'. During his siege of Suakin he fought eight battles in the Red Sea Hills, defeating Tahir Pasha in the battle of Aldeb (23 December 1883) and General Baker in the battle of Tokar (4 February 1884), and engaging the British squadrons in the battle of Handub (January 1888) where he broke the British square. On Kerreri day (2 September 1898) his fierce ambush of the British 21st Lancers at Khor Shambat was considered by Winston Churchill the highlight of the battle of Omdurman. I had read much about Uthman Digna and regarded him as one of our great national heroes.

The day after my arrival I visited his grave in the cemetery behind the tomb of Sidi Ibrahim el Mirghani. There was no identifying headstone, only a low surrounding mud wall with his name scratched on it. The Nubians, though respecting him as a holy man and admiring his religious qualities, knew nothing of the past history of the 'Fekki' who spent nineteen years among them in strict captivity and eventually died and was buried in their town. I attributed this to the fact that Halfa had never been part of the Sudan during Mahdism, and so its inhabitants were detached from the events of those years in the Sudan and the roles played by the great men of the revolution.

On 5 October 1958 I wrote to the Governor Northern Province, proposing that the body of Uthman Digna should be exhumed and transferred to the Beja country for reburial among the descendants of the warriors who had fought gallantly in his ranks, and suggested that a worthy monument should be built on his grave, in token of the nation's gratitude. However, my proposal was ignored. In June 1963, under the threat of the flood, I raised the matter again by sending the Commission a memorandum surveying his history and suggesting that since all his military achievements in the Red Sea Hills had been aimed at the conquest of Suakin, an ambition he had cherished so dearly yet not been able to achieve, his body should be reburied at the entrance to that once formidable city, at Kitchener's Gate. Further I suggested that a monument representing the details of his military glory should be built on his grave to perpetuate his memory for future generations.

For obscure reasons the ministerial committee refrained from answering and so left the matter in the air. However, Dr. Taha Baasher, the government psychiatrist, was carrying out a survey of the area at that time, and often visiting Wadi Halfa. His grandfather, Amin Beit el Mal, had been treasurer to Uthman Digna. On one of his visits we came to the conclusion that the salvage of Uthman Digna's body was a national issue, and that it was the Government's duty to see it done. We decided that if the ministerial committee did not change its negative attitude before the rise of the flood, we ourselves would open the grave and send the remains for burial either to Omdurman or Suakin at our own expense.

In August, hope came from other quarters. Imam El Hadi el Mahdi and Sayed el Sadig, aware of the hesitation of the ministerial committee, had contacted the Commission, seeking approval for the exhumation and for reburial of Uthman Digna's body in the Mahdi's tomb. The press became interested, and the issue attracted some attention. Taha Uthman, in an attempt to apply more pressure, had released my proposal to the press. On its publication, the town clerk of Port Sudan Municipal Council, Sayed El Nazir Hamad, brought the matter to the attention of his Council, who welcomed the proposal and appointed a special committee to arrange a public reception of the body at Port Sudan and a big celebration for its burial at the Gate of Suakin. The Chairman of the Council notified the Minister of the Interior of the Council decision, and sought his approval before going ahead with their preparations. The ministerial committee felt that the issue had become too hot to be ignored any longer and that a positive decision should be given. A joint committee was then set up, partly of representatives of the Ansar and partly of the Commission staff, to consider a suitable place for reburial, but no decision was reached and



the matter became deadlocked again. The Minister of the Interior, General Irwa, then decided to place the matter in the hands of Port Sudan Municipal Council, to whom he granted approval to go ahead.

On 27 August I received a telegram from the town clerk of Port Sudan, informing me that the Council had deputed his assistant Sayed Suliman Uthman Fagiri to attend the exhumation at Wadi Halfa and accompany the body to Port Sudan, and that arrangements had been made with Sudan Railways to send a closed wagon to Wadi Halfa on the 28th, to transport the body.

Accordingly we prepared the following for the exhumation in good time: a strong air-tight timber coffin, a roll of white calico, bottles of perfumes and disinfectant, the Sudan flag for covering the coffin, six diggers with picks and shovels, and ten wreaths with cloth labels, each bearing the name and date of one of Uthman Digna's ten battles (to be ready on the day of exhumation). The medical inspector was asked to attend and supervise the exhumation.

A notice was published inviting the remaining inhabitants to be present for the occasion at 4 p.m. on 30 August at the cemetery. On 29 August Suliman arrived from Port Sudan. He told me that his Council had prepared a great show for the historic occasion, and that the new grave had already been dug near Kitchener's Gate in Suakin. At the appointed time, amid a big crowd of people, four diggers set to work with their picks and shovels upon the grave of Uthman Digna. The soil was soft and the digging easy. Within a quarter of an hour, they struck the stone slabs covering the trench in which the body rested. The first slab covering the head was removed, and we could see the white calico in perfect condition, with the ribbon tying the end of the shroud at the top of the head. Then the rest of the slabs were removed one by one revealing the whole body wrapped in its shroud and absolutely intact. The shroud itself was in a good state, not a stitch was missing and the passage of thirty-seven years had left only a slight yellowish tinge on its snowy whiteness. There was a faint odour, indicating that the slim body of the old man had not decomposed by dehydration. The body was then raised from the grave by six men, two at the feet, two at the shoulders and two at each side. It was laid on a patch of flat ground, and then the face was uncovered for identification. The features were recognisable, although the cheeks were eroded to the bones. The rest of the skin stuck to the skull. Uthman's hair and bushy eyebrows were still there and his long broad beard was still stained with the red dye of henna. Then we covered his face, and the whole body was wrapped up in the new calico cloth, sprinkled with perfumes and placed in the coffin. The lid was nailed down and the coffin was covered with the Sudan flag, over which the ten wreaths were heaped. The sight was both moving and majestic.

I delivered a long address, describing his life from the time he met the Mahdi after the conquest of El Obeid in 1882 and was appointed Emir of the East, until his death in captivity in Wadi Halfa in 1927. I paid tribute to the heroic valour with which he had stubbornly defended his country's liberty against foreign invasion, and ended my address by saying:

Our great hero spent the last nineteen years of his life as a captive under British rule in this town, living confined with broken spirits until he passed away unnoticed, like any inferior common creature who had lived and died without leaving a trace behind him. But history is just; it never forgets, and the great deeds that men do always live after them, however much they may be ignored or disregarded for a time. They will continue to glow like a smouldering fire, and gain strength as time passes, then they flare and lighten the way to future generations. The moment has now come for us, in this generation, to honour and glorify him and to learn from his story the noble principles of patriotic devotion, courage and sense of manhood.

When I had finished, the coffin was carried by eight policemen with the wreaths piled on top of it, while the big crowd followed slowly and silently to the railway station. There it was placed inside the van, which was locked and sealed. The next day the van was connected to the



39. The coffin of Uthman Digna after exhumation

passenger train which left in the morning. On its arrival at Atbara on the morning of 1 September, it was met by a big crowd at the station, led by the Military Governor, who delivered an address. The van was detached from the passenger train, placed in a siding, and then in the evening connected to a goods train leaving for Port Sudan. Before the train left Suliman was suddenly given official notification that the place of burial had been changed from Suakin to Erkowit, and that he should hand over the van to a police officer at Summit station 'opposite Erkowit'. Early next morning the van was slipped from the train, taken over by the police officer and Suliman resumed his journey to Port Sudan, alone and discontented. The public at Port Sudan, who had already made their arrangements for a big reception, were very disappointed at the sudden change. On the same day General Irwa made a statement giving the reasons for the change. First, Uthman Digna had not conquered Suakin and so it would be pointless to bury his body there. They had selected Erkowit because it had been his observation point for most of the raids in the Red Sea hills. And as Erkowit was a popular place for tourism it would be better to bury his body there and build a monument and a small museum which could be visited by tourists, rather than placing them by the deserted ruins of Suakin, where he would be rarely visited.

This statement, although it contained cogent reasons, nevertheless gave rise to some speculation, on the part of the Ansar in particular, that General Irwa, being a Khatmist, did not want to see Uthman Digna buried in Suakin near the tomb of El Sayed Tag el Sir el Mirghani. Whatever his reasons, the great reception at Port Sudan was cancelled and the burial was delayed for two days to enable those wishing to attend from Port Sudan to come. On 4 September, the Military Governor of Port Sudan, accompanied by the members of the Municipal Council, senior officials and notables, including representatives of Uthman Digna's family, came to Summit station. Sayed Sir el Khatim Jaafar el Mirghani also attended from Sinkat. Army officers and men of Gabeit Garrison were also present. By a stroke of bad luck, engine trouble forced the plane taking Imam El Hadi el Mahdi and leading Ansar personalities to return to Khartoum shortly after take-off, and so they missed the occasion. At Summit, the coffin was removed from the van on the shoulders of army officers, while others had carried the wreaths, which were still in good condition, though rather dry by then, and marched slowly beside the coffin which was then placed in an army truck and taken to Erkowit followed by a long motorcade. The grave was ready on top of a low hill near Erkowit Hotel, and the burial took place.

In 1966 I visited the grave and was dismayed to see it located at an

insignificant spot with a crude flat slab over it, roughly plastered with cement. As it happened, Abboud's regime had ended a month after the reburial, and nobody thought of carrying out their promise to build the monument and museum.

On 5 September, having finished with the evacuation of the body of Uthman Digna, I received a private telegram from El Sayed Mohamed Uthman el Mirghani, the eldest son of El Sayed Ali el Mirghani informing me that a deputation of *khulafa* – i.e. senior dignitaries of the Khatmia sect in the Sudan – would soon arrive at Wadi Halfa for the exhumation and transfer of the body of Sidi Ibrahim el Mirghani to New Halfa, and requesting that I should do all I could to help them. I complied with this important request and made all the arrangements necessary for the exhumation and evacuation of the body of the holy man, on the same lines as for that of Uthman Digna. Wreaths were prepared, and the Khatmia had already arranged for the decorations required for the occasion according to the ways of their sect.

On the 6th a deputation of 250 persons arrived in Wadi Halfa on a specially chartered train, led by Khalifa Ibrahim Salih Suwar el Dahab, Khalifa Ali Mohamed Uthman Malik, Khalifa Mohamed el Amin Khojali and Khalifa Mirghani Mahgoub, all well-known and respected figures in the Khatmia sect. They were met by a crowd of citizens at Angash station, and I told Khalifa Ibrahim Salih of all the preparations we had made, and he thanked me, saying that, knowing the hard situation in Wadi Halfa, they had brought all the equipment they needed with them. It was then agreed that as the train was scheduled to leave at 11 a.m. on the 8th, the exhumation should begin on that day, early in the morning.

On the 7th at 9 a.m. Khalifa Ibrahim Salih contacted me by telephone, telling me that they had decided to carry out the exhumation at once – a day early – and that there was already a big gathering at the tomb. He requested me to attend, and I therefore hurried to the tomb of Sidi Ibrahim. I found a mass of people filling the mosque and the yard where the tomb was, reciting with deep emotion the religious poems of the Khatmia sect. Some were flashing their swords in the air, while others wept. Khalifa Ibrahim Salih Suwar el Dahab met me at the gate and conducted me inside the tomb. There I found a mass of people packed like sardines, leaving no space for someone to set his foot, let alone for the diggers to do their work. Only with the help of the police could part of the crowd be cleared away and the digging start. The ceremony was led by Khalifa Ali Mohamed Uthman Malik. In a speech he related the history of Sidi Ibrahim, read a chapter from the Koran, then led the crowd in the recitation of 'El Barragh' a religious poem normally recited at burials. All the while,



40. The coffin of Sidi Ibrahim el Mirghani

digging continued and the sand was shovelled out of the grave. Suddenly the pickaxe struck the slab cover. There was a pause of deep silence. The diggers only cleared the sand from the pit leaving the slabs as they were without going any further. At that moment Khalifa Ibrahim Salih took me outside the tomb and showed me a list containing the names of six *khulafa*, in the hand-writing of El Sayed Ali el Mirghani, telling me that El Sayed Ali directed that only six persons should be present inside the tomb at the time of exhumation. I therefore ordered the police to clear everyone from the tomb and to allow no one to enter except with the permission of Khalifa Ibrahim. In a moment everybody was out and the six *khulafa* entered and locked the door behind them. I stayed outside. After a quarter of an hour the door opened and I was called for. I entered the tomb with a crowd squeezing through the door behind me. There I saw the body of Sidi Ibrahim lying on a heap of sand beside the grave pit. The shroud still looked very white. The body seemed in perfect condition, short, stout, full and still fleshy. The fifty-six years since his burial had naturally affected the strength of the cloth, as it was slightly torn at the side; Khalifa Malik said this had happened when they raised the body from the trench. A Nubian *khalifa* who attended the exhumation and took

part in raising the body told me that the body was still fresh — a statement that I was inclined to believe.

Within moments the tomb was flooded with people, each forcing his way through to touch the body for blessing. Others got down into the trench, scooped up the blessed sand and carried as much as they could in the lower edges of their *jellabias* and turbans, using them as loose bags. Others still carried away the stone slabs of the grave, to be used in their own graves. Outside the tomb there was tumult. There were mixed sounds of weeping and chanting. Men were dancing with sticks and swords and everybody was excited by the marvel of the body's preservation. Much animal blood had flowed to mark the occasion and meat was distributed to everybody. It was as if the occasion was attended by some supernatural power, since it undoubtedly deepened people's faith in the holiness of Sidi Ibrahim.

The body was then laid on an *angareb* (local bed) and carried to an open space in the mosque covered only with a sheet of transparent green cloth so that everybody could see it. It remained in that state until after the evening prayer, and was then laid in the coffin and kept inside the mosque under police guard till next day.

On 8 September at 10 a.m. the tomb yard was again crowded with people. The coffin was now placed on a specially decorated *angareb* and carried in a huge procession on the shoulders of policemen to Angash station, where it was placed inside a closed van. The special train left at 11 a.m.

El Sayed Ali el Mirghani had first wanted to transfer the body of Sidi Ibrahim to Khartoum North for burial inside the tomb of El Sayed El Mahgoub, but owing to the persistent request of Nubians to have it buried in their new home, he sent it to New Halfa for burial there.

The residents of Degheim village were displeased to see the body removed from their area, as they had a strong belief that as long as Sidi Ibrahim remained with them the Nile would never flood their land. The majority of them were so upset that they refused to attend the exhumation.

The train was met at Abu Hamad by a crowd who came to pay tribute to the holy man. Bulls were slaughtered and alms were distributed to the poor. In Atbara a big gathering, which included the Military Governor, turned up at the station to pay their respects. At Haya, El Sayed Ahmed el Mirghani, the younger son of Sayed Ali, accompanied by El Sayed Sir el Khatim and El Sayed Hashim, the sons of El Sayed Jaafar, joined the train to New Halfa. At Kassala, the whole town, led by El Sayed El Hassan el Mirghani, made a big celebration for the reception of the body. Long before the train arrived at New Halfa, it was met by hundreds of Shukria and Hadandawa on

camels and a big motorcade of cars and lorries, which raced along beside it to its destination. It stopped at a spot opposite the place of burial, where masses of people had gathered, some from remote places, to attend the burial. All the Shukria tribal heads, accompanied by thousands of followers, were there on their camels, flashing their swords as a sign of tribute. The Nubians gathered from all the villages to receive the body of their holy saint, under whose blessing they had lived for so long in their old home.

The coffin was then brought out of the van. The feeling of the crowd was tense and there was a tumult and chanting. Some people, in their excitement, shouted at the top of their voices. Others wept. The Military Governor of the area and the tribal heads made moving speeches. El Khalifa Ali Uthman Malik thanked the people for the trouble they had taken in coming from far-off places to attend the burial, and in slaughtering '*karama*' camels, bulls and rams. The grave was ready and the body was taken out of the coffin and buried. A temporary shed of galvanised iron was erected over the grave, until the tomb could be built. Later El Sayed Ali el Mirghani secured a spacious piece of land in New Halfa town on which to build a religious school and a mosque bearing the name of Sidi Ibrahim, together with a magnificent monument over the grave.

A week after the exhumation and transfer of the body of Sidi Ibrahim, I received a deputation of Ansar sent by Iman El Hadi el Mahdi for the exhumation and evacuation of the body of his uncle, El Sayed el Tahir el Mahdi, who died in Wadi Halfa on his way from exile in Egypt in 1908. As he was buried in the cemetery of Degheim village which had already been submerged at the time of their arrival, no exhumation was carried out and the deputation returned to Khartoum. Of the ordinary dead, only the body of Sayed Ahmed Abu Gabal, the father-in-law of Ibrahim Medani, was exhumed and sent for burial in Khartoum. All the rest were left undisturbed.

On 17 September I finally left Wadi Halfa on transfer to Khartoum, leaving Nadim behind to carry out the evacuation of the two remaining batches and the emigration of the third phase, which was mainly concerned with the *omodias* of Saras, Dawashat and Akasha. By 23 September the last batch of the first and second phase had left the area.

On 21 October President Abboud's regime came to an end. The new government, moved by a desire to smear the administration of Abboud, joined hands with the anti-emigration elements in Khartoum and old Halfa, opening the door wide for accusations and criticism on the whole issue of the emigration and resettlement. Eventually petitions containing all sorts of charges and indictments against the persons who had carried out the emigration and resettlement were presented. A board of

inquiry was set up to investigate and report on all aspects of the issue. It held several meetings and gained access to all the documents and reports of the Commission, in addition to a general audit carried out on all accounts of expenditure. The board found nothing to justify unfavourable comment. The Prime Minister, accompanied by some ministers and leading Nubians from Khartoum, paid a visit to old Halfa and met the residents there. Naturally he found them in a difficult position, being in a state of continual movement, with the rising water of the lake at their heels; it would take some years to reach the permanent shore where they could settle finally. Instead of being practical he made wild promises, which were impossible to carry out, to settle them immediately.

These manoeuvres delayed the emigration of the third phase and kept the issue in doubt, while the waters continued to rise, threatening to flood the northern part of Faras and to cut the only road south. Fortunately the situation did not continue for long. As soon as the elected government came to power, a decision was taken to resume the emigration of the third phase. Funds were approved for the construction of villages, and the contractors had time to complete the buildings at a reasonable pace. The design of house had been improved to a more suitable style, though with the same accommodation.

On 20 October 1965, exactly one year after the end of President Abboud's administration, the first batch of the third phase had left for Khashm el Girba, and by 23 November the last batch was cleared from the area. A total of 2357 persons emigrated. The only difficulty in the evacuation of this phase was the great distance that had to be covered by motor transport from the villages to the railway station and airport of Wadi Halfa – in the case of Ukma and Akasha, the distance was 120 km. No incident of any importance occurred during the emigration of this phase, as far as I could gather from Nadim. At this point the emigration operation came to a close.



## COSTS OF EMIGRATION AND RESETTLEMENT

The budget of the Commission gave rise to much speculation and criticism, both in public gossip and in the press. The figures suggested by rumour, especially for the building of houses, were pretty exaggerated. Some estimated a figure of £S 27 million for housing alone. The following represents the final account of all the costs involved, as checked by the Commissioners of the Audit Department.

<i>Chapters</i>	£S
<i>I. Salaries and Allowances</i>	1,636,130
Including the personal salaries and allowances of all the officials and workers of the government ministries who participated in the execution of the emigration and the resettlement scheme, such as the head office of the Commission, the administration of the emigration at Wadi Halfa, the resettlement office at Khashm el Girba, and the listing and payment of compensation. In addition, all the expenditure involved in the census operations and all the staff affected, of the Ministries of Works, Irrigation, Agriculture, Forests, Health, Education, Security, Animal Resources, Survey and Information, who were responsible to the Resettlement Commission.	
<i>II. Departmental Services</i>	755,446
The biggest single item under this heading was motor transport of the evacuees and their baggage from their dwellings to the railway station in Wadi Halfa and from the stations to their new villages in Khashm el Girba. It also included motor and rail transport of all the officials and workers during the years of construction of the resettlement scheme, all post and telegraph services, and stationery.	
<i>III. Housing and Public Service Building</i>	15,901,269
The biggest and most important item of the whole operation. Under this item 7,224 farmers' houses and 203 government houses for officials	

and workers were built, in addition to a big mosque in New Halfa Town, 25 small mosques in the villages, four intermediate schools and a *mahaad* (religious school), 27 elementary schools, a big hospital of first-class standard, public administration offices for the local council, two courts, Police H.Q., veterinary hospital, stalls for meat and vegetables in the town, a prison, Post and Telegraph Office, Irrigation and Agriculture head offices and a public water works for the town. The farmers' houses alone cost £S 14,000,000.

*IV. Consultant Engineers' Fees* 427,071

Representing all the payments paid to Messrs. Kocks, Engineers, and the Sudanese consultants who supervised the execution of the buildings.

*V. Compensation* 3,913,867

Paid to Wadi Halfa inhabitants for all their immovable property lost under the lake. Compensation for date trees alone came to about £S.3 million. Land and house property were excluded from this amount.

*VI. The Administration of Emigration* 1,036,577

Including the railway transport of Wadi Halfa inhabitants and their baggage to their new home, the packing of their baggage and their journey meals.

*VII. Subsistence of Emigrants* 131,542

Paid by the Government as a counterpart share for aid sent by the F.A.O. and the cost of meals offered to the emigrants on the day of their arrival in their new home. Cost of administration of the food stocks sent by F.A.O. and their storage is included.

*VIII. Other Expenditure* 2,196,784

Out of this sum all the agricultural machinery was purchased for the Khashm el Girba Scheme, as well as the fleet of motor vehicles needed for the administration of the scheme. It also included all expenditure for the preparation of land in the first phase of the scheme, the experimental farm and the sugar factory, the excavation of all Abu Ishreen canals, and constructing the filter wells in the villages.

The above items of expenditure on the emigration and resettlement operation come to a total of £S 25,995,686.

Many people blamed General Farid — or rather, the administration of Abboud — for accepting £S 15 million as compensation from Egypt, on the grounds that it was far too little. The argument of the critics gave undue consideration to the heavy expenditure on the construction of the farmers' houses, and at the time they added to it the £S 11

million spent on the construction of Khashm el Girba Dam. They believed that all this expenditure ought to have been included in the bill submitted by General Farid to the Egyptian Government. Personally I think this an unfair argument. In the first place nearly all the houses submerged by the reservoir were of low standard, being either of crude mud or mud bricks. Their average value as shown in the compensation lists did not exceed £S 250 each. Had Abboud's administration built the new villages in Khashm el Girba to the same standard as in Wadi Halfa the £S 14 million would have been reduced to £S 2.1 million, which was the actual valuation of the Nubians' dwellings, or at most £S 3 million, taking into account the slightly higher cost of mud buildings in the central Sudan. Those who argue that mud buildings would not survive in the climatic conditions of Khashm el Girba should understand that all the villages of the Gezira, with its heavier rainfall, are made of mud, and that some houses in Khashm el Girba itself were built of crude mud. It was only because Abboud's administration had rightly decided to create modern living conditions with up-to-date planning and permanent construction - which was outside the concern of the Egyptians - that the cost shot up so high. Again, had things gone well with Turriff, the figure would have been more than halved. It should also be borne in mind that the Egyptians themselves could not provide such a high standard of construction for their own Nubians who had emigrated to Kom Ombo. Secondly the argument for adding the cost of Khashm el Girba Dam or part of it to the bill is refuted by the fact that the Halfa people had no dam in their old home. Their means of irrigation were limited either to their traditional *sagiyas* or small-bore pumps, which were compensated for under Chapter V of the above budget. It is relevant too that all the pumps were dismantled by the Ministry of Agriculture and used in other parts of the Sudan. Khashm el Girba Dam was a separate scheme, which had been under consideration since the time of the British administration, when the High Dam was only an idea, attracting the imagination of a few adventurous hydrologists. Had an alternative project been selected instead of the High Dam, the Khashm el Girba scheme would still have been executed and I do not think that there would have been any objections to allowing the Nubians, as part of the Sudanese community and on the grounds of their severe shortage in land, to come and settle in the scheme area without losing what they had invested in their original home. It was only because the emergency in Wadi Halfa had hastened its execution that many people thought it had been developed specially for the Halfawin, not realising that the Halfa people occupied only one-fifth of the area, while the rest was distributed among the local tribes.

There were two important facts the critics lost sight of. First, the net benefit to the Sudan of the Nile water resulting from the building of the High Dam was 14½ milliard cubic metres, double the amount reaped by the Egyptians themselves. Yet the Egyptian treasury bore all the cost of the construction of the project, without involving the Sudan in any financial commitment. The second fact was that all the expenditure on the development of Khashm el Girba Scheme was not wasted. Apart from house construction and cash compensation, all the expenditure was on fruitful economic investment. The project is essentially revenue-producing: besides the income enjoyed by the tenants from their agricultural crops, it contributes £S 6 million annually to the public treasury.

Thirdly the rates of compensation for the date trees were criticised as being too generous, compared with the £S 2 paid by the Egyptians for a date tree in lower Nubia. I admit that we were slightly on the generous side but not too generous. I have already discussed how we worked out a criterion for equitable compensation rates. The general principle of the committee members concerned was strictly against any injustice being done to the Nubians in the compensation assessment of their date trees. We all felt that it was better to overpay them slightly than to rob them slightly. The results turned out to be quite compatible with the current market prices of date trees, and the Nubians benefited from having their old and very young trees treated the same as those in their prime. The yardstick used by the Egyptians for the assessment of compensation in lower Nubia is not my concern. All the public service buildings shown under Chapter III were meant for services to the whole scheme area and the surrounding villages, and not only for Wadi Halfa inhabitants. To charge their whole cost against the Wadi Halfa resettlement budget would have been unfair.

Let us now take a realistic view of the bill which ought to have been settled by the Egyptians as fair compensation to the Sudan Government. Section 5 of the second chapter of the agreement defined the main purpose for which the compensation was paid. It specified clearly:

'The United Arab Republic agrees to pay to the Sudan Republic 15 million Egyptian pounds as full compensation for the damage resulting to the Sudanese existing properties as a result of the storage in the Sudd El Aali Reservoir up to a reduced level of 182 metres (Survey datum).'

Thus it is clear that the compensation was meant for the *property damaged* under the reservoir lake and for no other purpose. Keen critics were saying that the cost of a livelihood scheme for the Halfa people ought to have been included, forgetting that all the agricultural

economy (land, date trees and means of irrigation) was actually part of the property damaged for which the £S 15 million pounds were paid. The following are the details of the property which had actually been lost together with estimated values:

	£S.
1. Nubian houses	2,000,000
2. Date trees and other agricultural assets	3,500,000
3. Land (15,000 <i>feddans</i> )	2,500,000
4. Government buildings	250,000
<i>Total</i>	<u>8,250,000</u>

The above is the total cost of the property lost under the lake in the affected area, for which, strictly, the compensation was being paid to the Sudan Government. The administration of the emigration until the safe arrival of the evacuees at their new villages will cover the whole of Chapter VI (£S 1,036,577); half, at the most, of Chapter I (£S 818,065); the whole of Chapter II (£S 755,446) and the whole of Chapter VII (£S 131,542). This brings the total to £S 10,991,630 leaving a surplus of £S 4 million for any improvement in the resettlement scheme. I think it is by this calculation that one should judge whether or not the sum of £S 15 million pounds was fair compensation.

My own criticism of the bill put forward by General Farid was that it was based on guesswork and was not supported by a detailed list of the property affected or a proper estimate of its cost. It thus had an element of gambling – and by a sheer stroke of luck, the outcome was fair.

One last point of criticism concerned the additional expenditure which occurred in the construction works at the site of Khashm el Girba Dam. The original estimate was for £S 7 million, but owing to additional constructional works and other unforeseen circumstances, it rose to £S 11 million. The press was excited about this, and the editors, who were ignorant of the exact situation, published critical articles. The exact situation, as submitted by the Ministry of Irrigation on 24 September 1966, carried the following details relating to additional works not previously embodied in their contract with Messrs. Torno.

	£S
1. The diversion of the river course from the east to the west bank.	49,000
2. Lining the bed and banks of the main canal with reinforced concrete to a considerable distance at its outlet from the reservoir lake.	272,400

3.	Constructional works for the turbine station at the upstream end of the Dam.	125,000
4.	During the construction of the Dam, the Government decided to build a sugar factory in the Khashm el Girba area. Sugar cane, unlike other rotational crops, needs continuous irrigation throughout the year. During the months of drought, the level of the reservoir lake was too low to feed the main canal, but there was sufficient accumulation of water in the deep parts of the lake, below the contour of the canal, which could not be made use of. Eventually it was decided to erect two electric relay pumps of giant bore at the Dam site to lift the amount of water required for the irrigation of the sugar plantation into the main canal during the dry season. The cost of this was	350,000
5.	Finishing touches to the Dam and other constructional works	450,500
6.	Additional equipment for the electro-mechanical works	476,000
7.	While blasting the ditch for the foundation of the Dam, Messrs. Torno unexpectedly struck a fissure in the rock sediment and had to blast deeper until they reached the bottom of the crack. This involved additional expenditure for excavating the foundation and creating a reinforced concrete lining	91,371
8(a)	Temporary precautionary measures made at the river bed	88,000
(b)	Claim of consultant engineers for additional works	259,534
9(a)	Claim of Messrs. Torno for accelerating the rate of building to compensate for the time lost in repairing the coffer dams and more blasting in the foundation ditch	779,000
(b)	Claim of Messrs. Torno for their works on the electro-mechanical electric work connected with the pumps	40,000
10.	Reinforcing concrete works at first proposed without reinforcement	1,300,000
<i>Total</i>		<u>4,286,805</u>

The Council of Ministers approved this sum on 17 October 1966.

## POST-EMIGRATION PROBLEMS

By the close of 1964 more than two-thirds of the inhabitants of the affected area had already arrived at Khashm el Girba and started to settle in their new villages and the town of 'New Halfa'. Their new life differed in many respects from what they had known in their previous home. First, their environment had changed. The Nile with its green banks and islands, covered with a mat of vegetation and with forests of date trees on either side — the river through which they had glided their sailing *feluccas* and observed the steamers going to and from Egypt loaded with passengers and goods — none of this existed in their new home. The Atbara river was a narrow gorge compared with the broad Nile, and its banks were ugly, dotted here and there with dry thorny acacia scrub, which emphasised their barrenness. Instead of the vacant expanse of the Sahara with its rainless sands and rocky hills, which had separated them from the rest of mankind, they had a flat belt of rainy savannah inhabited by new Arab settlers in the scheme area or by camel-breeders wandering with their herds in the Butana. Moreover their mode of agriculture had been radically altered. There were no more date trees in the new home, no *sagiyas* and no *guruf*. Instead of the acute shortage of land from which they had suffered for so long in Wadi Halfa, and the rotational crops, most of which could be sown and grown by the housewives, the problem now was to cope with the cultivation requirements of the broad new *hawashas* which they had been given. Apart from wheat, the rotational crops which had once made up their diet now had to be bought from the market. Lentils, beans, chickpeas, lupins and peas, whose leaves (*wirreig*) were cooked as a popular dish and eaten with *kabida*, could not be grown in Khashm el Girba. Their new houses were built in the central Sudan style, rather than to the traditional Nubian design, to suit the weather conditions of their new environment. No china dishes now decorated the gates of houses, nor were there any terraces along the front boundary wall on which women could sit on social occasions; and above all, there were no shady palm trees under which they could shelter from the heat of the sun. Economically they had lost their assured labourless income

of dates and they had to rely on the strength of their muscles or the services of costly machines. Their income from postal money orders had also dropped in proportion to the number of absentee heads of families who had chosen to come back and settle with their children in the new home. Generally, their ecology was shaken to the roots; and their new environment presented new fields of experience and alien conditions to which they had to adapt themselves.

To discuss the effects of all these changes on the Nubian community who have settled in Khashm el Girba is not my object here, but I think they invite the interest of sociologists and offer them a wide field for research. I am concerned to present a clear picture of the steps taken to solve the immediate problems that faced the emigrants at the initial stage, to set their feet on the right road towards final settlement.

### (i) *Land Tenancies*

However, the original plan of the resettlement scheme consisted of twenty-three villages of 250 houses each, with sufficient area around each village to cover as many tenancies as there were houses. New Halfa town, the heart of the scheme, was situated in the middle. The villages were sited 8 km. apart from each other, so that the farthest tenancy should not be more than 4 km. from a village boundary, and accordingly it would be within easy reach of the farmer. Unfortunately during the execution of the building programme, the Government, responding to rumours that a high proportion of Halfa people would prefer to stay by the shore of the lake, had decided to reduce the number of houses in many villages, notably in Villages Nos. 4, 7, 9, 12, 16, 21, where the number of houses was reduced to 175 in each; in Village No. 23 to 200 houses, and in the Villages Nos. 20 and 33, to 235 houses. This decision had a dual effect. In the first place it made it necessary later, when the situation had become clear, to build two more villages to cater for the resulting overspill, and secondly it left many villages with more tenancies than houses, while in others the land fell short of the inhabitants' needs. This caused some confusion over the even distribution of tenancies which had been planned. When the Government conceded the demands of the El Hasa people for the separation of freehold land from the scheme area, it was at the expense of the land already assigned for tenancies, and so the number of *hawashas* was in practice reduced, though the decision was coupled with the cancellation of the grant of one *feddan* per family previously proposed for fruit gardens. This also contributed to upsetting the system of strict reservation of all tenancies of each village around its boundary. Finding no means of solving this confused problem, the



Government decided that the grant of tenancies should follow a loose system based on the priority of arrival of emigrants. In this muddled situation the first batches of the emigration arrived at Khashm el Girba.

Immediately following the arrival of the first batches, another problem presented itself, arising out of an item in the tenancy agreement whereby each farmer had to pay a water rate of £S 9.600 for the irrigation of his five *feddans* of wheat rotation. This was rejected by the Nubians. The assessment of this water rate had in fact been based on the criteria for determining the cost of irrigation of the whole scheme, a theory which took into consideration the running, maintenance and depreciation costs of all the assets of irrigation. To calculate it properly, the most important ingredient, which had been the subject of a long debate, was the life expectancy of Khashm el Girba Dam itself. The representative of the Irrigation Department had quoted only forty years. The argument put forward by the non-technical members that Sennar Dam, which was built of stone and cement mortar, had already survived for forty years and was expected to do so for many more years to come, had no effect, and the proposed figure was taken unaltered. This considerably raised the cost of irrigation of the scheme and made it almost equal to that of pump irrigation. The Nubians resisted the principle of water-rate collection, on the grounds that, in the Gezira Scheme, the tenancy agreements did not embody any water-rate collection from the farmers in respect of their wheat or *dura* and the Government had contented itself with a share in the profits on cotton production and with the taxation paid by the farmers for their private crops. Consequently they demanded that the same conditions should apply to them.

The third problem was purely psychological. It was decided that all tenancies should be ploughed and made ready for cultivation in good time so that they could be distributed to the emigrants immediately on their arrival for sowing the winter rotation. General Irwa in his speech of welcome to the first batch had hinted at this. On the very day after their arrival the emigrants were invited to take over their farms and start working on the rotation. This action, so mechanically applied, ignored the psychological conditions of the emigrants during their first days in their new home. They should not have been expected, just after their arrival with heavy hearts at leaving their original home, in a place totally new to them, with their baggage not yet unpacked, to swarm next day to the field and sow their wheat. They would need some time to unpack their belongings, set their new houses in order and acquaint themselves with their new houses and villages and exactly how they fitted into their new environment. Their minds were full of domestic

worries, and there was no room for the problems of cultivation with its labour difficulties and physical exertion. The ministerial committee was of the opinion that the missing of the rotation would be a national loss. In this they could have been right, but to avoid this loss they should have made their arrangements for the emigrants to arrive earlier.

All these factors combined to make the new arrivals refuse to take over their new tenancies. Their grievance was centred around the water rate. Attempts by the Government to persuade them to accept it failed, with the result that the ministerial committee, with its burning desire not to miss the rotation, decided that the tenancies should be granted to any citizen, Nubian or not, without tenancy commitment until the whole question of the water rate was considered. This decision threw open the door through which non-Nubian applicants, mostly from the local tribes, could rush in and seize hold of the *hawashas*. The local tribes alone got 1,400 tenancies. The effects of this decision added more complications to an already complex situation.

Before the start of next season, the Government had reconsidered the question of the water rate and decided to exempt the wheat rotation from payment, as in the Gezira. The immediate reaction of the Nubians to this decision was favourable and they demanded the return of their tenancies. But here more trouble ensued. The local tribes refused to give up their 1,400 *hawashas*, upon which they were squatting, until they received compensation, in the second and third phases of the scheme. This made the orderly distribution of tenancies more difficult. The situation was aggravated by the loose policy applied in the distribution itself. There were about 500 Nubian heads of families who were granted two tenancies each; twenty-two were granted three each and fifteen lucky ones had five or six *hawashas* each. The result was that a wave of encroachment swept all the village zones throughout the resettlement area from Faras to Degheim. Even the sugar plantation was affected in one way and compensated in another. Thousands of farmers found their tenancies in the wrong villages, at places far from their homes; thus the principle behind the good planning which had been decided on at first was undermined. Successive governments appointed one commission after another to make revisions, but they made very slow progress. Owners of multi-tenancies were left with one *hawasha* each and ejected from the rest which were regranted to deprived heads of families.

So the whole trouble can be attributed to five factors: first, the thinning out and the creation of new villages in disproportion to the number of tenancies; secondly, a unilateral decision taken by the Government to include the freehold land in the scheme area without

referring the matter to the inhabitants at the initial stage of planning, a decision which had been exploded at the wrong time by El Hasa inhabitants; thirdly, the undue imposition of water rate on the wheat rotation; fourthly, the indecent haste in inducing the emigrants to take over their *hawashas* at the confused moment of their arrival; and lastly, the allocation of the Nubian tenancies to the local tribes.

There was yet another land difficulty. No sooner had the Government separated the freehold land from the scheme area than the Nubians submitted a petition with the following demands as a condition for their agreement to the registration of their land: perennial irrigation for their freehold land; that land previously compensated for, during the second heightening of Aswan Dam, should not be excluded; that all the fragmentary shares of the inhabitants of each village should be collected and allocated to them in the vicinity of their abode; that *salluka* land should be compensated at the rate of 3 to 1 in the scheme area; that leasehold agricultural land should also be compensated for, with equal area; that *salluka* landowners wishing to be compensated in cash should be allowed to have it so; and that the freehold land of the Dabarosa inhabitants should be assigned to them around the town boundary.

It seemed that the Nubians' complaints would have no limit, but one had to be patient, look into each case and decide it on its merits. With this spirit the ministerial committee gave due consideration to this petition and took the various decisions. One was that the Town and Village Land Schemes (1948) should apply to the administration of land in New Halfa Town and the twenty-five villages of the Nubians. This provides for the registration of freehold for freehold and lease for lease, on condition that all the residential plots in the villages should be held on a 30-year lease. Secondly, freehold agricultural land should be re-registered after doubling the shares, and the statute of limitation of the minimum area for registration should not apply. Thirdly, all lands duly compensated for during the second heightening of Aswan Dam in the 1930s should be excluded from the register. And finally, fragmentary divided shares belonging to any individual should be sorted out, collected and registered to him in one plot, and those who wished to have their shares registered as undivided, as the case was in their old home, could have it so.

This fair decision was quite acceptable to the Nubians, but the sorting out and the collection of the fragmentary shares of every individual from the various villages and the different *omodias* presented a big problem to the Commissioner for Compensation and the land clerks, and it took them years of hard work.

*(ii) Houses*

The second main problem concerned the maintenance of houses and their final delivery to the emigrants.

It has already been described how the whole housing programme was built in a hurry – for which neither the Government nor the local contractors should be held responsible. At the same time, the four-year period between the conclusion of the Agreement and the devastation of Wadi Halfa would have been quite sufficient to carry out the programme, had Messrs. Turriff not appeared on the scene and wasted such a long time in fruitless dialogue with the Government, so that when they finally withdrew, the Government and the local contractors had to rush to keep pace with the High Dam deadline. The time shortage did not favour careful building, and thus the strength of the houses could not be unequivocally assured although every possible step was taken to minimise the likelihood of future collapse. For this reason the Government reserved the right in the contracts to withhold a certain proportion of the payments both to the contractors and to the consultant engineers as caution money for maintenance and repairs should any cracks or damage appear during the four seasons of a complete year following delivery.

However, with the exception of village No. 1 (Faras West) in which some houses developed serious cracks and roof trusses came loose, the villages and the town buildings on the whole evidently stood the test period quite successfully, except for very minor defects. This offered the litigious Nubians a good chance to exercise their hobby. The appearance of a hair-like crack on a room wall was sufficient to initiate a long telegram of complaint. Petitions and complaints piled up so high in the office of the Commissioner for Resettlement and the Commission headquarters in Khartoum, that the contractors were compelled to leave permanent gangs in the resettlement area, hunting for cracks and treating them on appearance. Faras village, however, underwent major repairs, paid for by the deposits of the contractor Ali Dongola and the consultant engineers.

After a year had passed and maintenance had been carried out, the Nubians demanded that all their houses in the villages should be registered to them as freehold. I have already hinted earlier that the legal status of the ownership of residential land in the villages could not qualify for registration as freehold, mainly because the great flood of 1946 had wiped out all the old villages and the inhabitants had had to build their new villages on higher sites, which had given them the advantage of turning the areas of their old villages into agricultural land.

The period of their occupation of the new residential land was too short to warrant the application of the statute of *Wad el yad* ('laying of hand') which would establish the right for freehold registration. The Nubians at first turned a deaf ear to the legal argument, but when the above-quoted decision of the ministerial committee came out, they gave way. The Commissioner for Compensation was preparing the leases for issue when suddenly on 21 October 1964 Abboud's administration came to an end and the new government of the October Revolution destroyed the delicate balance achieved by opening the whole issue of the emigration and resettlement to public criticism. The Nubians, seeing that the new government would be receptive to any complaint against Abboud's regime, did not miss this golden opportunity, and so they submitted a long and strongly-worded petition against the bad state of their dwellings, and demanded that a commission be appointed to investigate and report on the matter to the Government. The Nubians hoped this petition would serve a dual purpose. In the first place it offered them a chance to know the exact state of their buildings by obtaining an outside technical opinion, and secondly they were interested in delaying the process of moving in, so that their dwellings could undergo the longest possible test, during which the responsibility for maintenance would still rest with the Government. The Government lost no time in appointing a technical commission, which toured the area and inspected all buildings. Their report stated that a big proportion of the houses would require maintenance. Funds were approved and the job was assigned to the Ministry of Works, who completed the work before the next rainy season. Yet the Nubians still refused to sign the leases and take over their houses on various pretexts, and continued playing their game of procrastination so skilfully that the Government has continued to undertake the maintenance until the time of writing.

It should be pointed out that Villages Nos. 24, 26 and part of No. 20, which were built later for the third phase of the emigration and delivered in 1967, were of very sound structure. No house showed any signs of deterioration, nor were any complaints made by any owner. It was because the contractors had adequate time to build them that their standard was satisfactory.

While the Nubians were keen to freeze the issue of taking over their dwellings, they did not themselves abide by that principle. Many of them took the liberty of introducing major alterations and additions to their houses, so much so that, when I visited them in 1966, I found many houses so changed that they had lost their original design. Modern verandahs with pillars, concrete roofing and mosquito nets were common, and in some houses the owners had knocked down partition

walls between rooms and converted them into spacious reception rooms, while others had added new rooms to their houses.

The last problem under this heading was a legal one. While the Commissioner for Compensation was assessing the houses for compensation in old Halfa, some owners (mostly owners of more than one house, or of partitioned houses) had differences with him as to their listing for compensation in kind. They made their complaints to the Province Judge, who decided in their favour. The Commissioner, who was not satisfied with the court decision, appealed to the Chief Justice, who quashed the Provincial Court's decision and confirmed his action. The trouble was that this legal procedure took so long that by the time the High Court decision was given, the owners were already in occupation of the houses previously granted them by the Provincial Court. Naturally they refused to give up their dwellings and tried to create a human problem out of the issue. The tug-of-war between them and the Commission continued until the latter was dissolved, and has not been concluded up to the time of writing.

### (iii) Agriculture

I have already mentioned that every family was granted a *hawasha* of 15 *feddans* of land, to be cultivated in three successive rotations of cotton, wheat and groundnuts, on the basis of 5 *feddans* for each. Both the size and type of agriculture employed in this system were alien to them, and except for wheat, they knew nothing of the two other rotations. The rotational cycle itself was quite different from the mixed agriculture of their old home, and was new to them. For the first time Nubian free cultivators found themselves enrolled as tenants in a scheme of systematic organisation and complex administration. In the first few days they used to say: '*Jina min Halfa la maaraf el farig bein el Sasareib wal shekshin A*', which meant 'We have recently come from Wadi Halfa; we don't know the difference between El Sasareib [a gravel quarry on the bank of the Atbara] and section A [a unit of administration in the scheme]'. The Nubians invented many jokes to convey their impressions when they first arrived in the scheme area. One told of a Nubian tenant having his *hawasha* handed over to him; seeing it was very big, he inquired about its area, and when told that it was fifteen *feddans*, exclaimed: 'Our *feddan* in Wadi Halfa was not so big!' The other told of a farmer who was issued with three sacks of groundnuts. When he asked why they had been issued, he was told that they were seeds for the rotation – to which he replied: 'Why sow them? They are quite enough to keep my family for a whole year.' These mild jokes give an idea of the general attitude of the Nubians

when they first came to the Scheme. With no experience of the new methods of agriculture and with no example to follow, they found they were the pioneer tenants in the whole Scheme area. The only blessing that came from the allocation of tenancies to the local tribes was the example which the latter set to the Nubians.

Clearly, the Nubians were not unaware of their difficulties, nor were they sitting idle during that short transitional period. Their sophistication helped them to grasp the new aspects of their situation, and payment of the remaining instalments of their cash compensation enabled them to plan to surmount those difficulties. Co-operative societies were created on a village basis, and the necessary funds were collected through shares sold to the tenants. Tractors and harvesters were soon ordered, but their importation would take time. The gap was filled by the mechanised teams of the Scheme administration, who ploughed the tenancies for some seasons until the new machines arrived.

Personally I did not like the creation of these societies on a village basis. They would carry with them the defects of co-operative agriculture in the Wadi Halfa and Dongola districts, where administrative shortcomings had caused many failures: most of the land-owners had been absentees, who at moments of enthusiasm during their leave had agreed to create co-operatives, had paid their shares but had then dispersed, leaving the work in the hands of the village sheikhs and a handful of residents, who could not cope with the details. I observed this during my tours when I was in Wadi Halfa. Once, as I was passing through a village, I observed that the land was dry and the rotation had been abandoned. The village Sheikh told me that the tractor driver had refused to plough the land. When I called for the driver, he told me that the engine needed a coil and one wheel a new tyre. When he had reported this, the village Sheikh only gave him the cost of the coil, saying that this would do for the time being; he refused to replace the blown tyre, 'as if he wanted the machine to reach a compromise with him; the result was that we lost a whole season.' In some other villages the inhabitants had lost faith in their co-operative societies and resorted to the traditional methods of agriculture. Dibeira Co-operative Society was a notorious example of a system where local differences had interfered in its activities and brought them to a complete standstill. In the new home, though many absentee heads had come back to join their families, the number of those still absent was still large. They had been with their families during the emigration, taken over their *hawasha*, paid their shares and returned where they had come from, leaving the troubles of administration to the village sheikhs and the resident members of the Society. During my first visit to the scheme area in July 1966, I was pleased to see that the Society of Angash village had achieved great success and that its harvest was the best in the

whole area; but when I met my old friend Uthman Mahir, the energetic sheikh of the village, I found him tired and disgusted. He complained of general fatigue and overwork. 'One day this society will break my back,' he said. 'Everybody has left his family and tenancy here and gone to his work somewhere else, leaving us wading in a bog of troubles.' They were lucky to have left their families and tenancies in the care of such an honest and active man as Sheikh Uthman Mahir, but one could hardly expect him to continue at that pace for long. After a short time Sheikh Uthman fell sick, and matters deteriorated.

I wished that the Nubians had considered my proposal for the creation of a big agricultural co-operative syndicate with a board of directors and permanent staff, to administer all their tenancies as a single unit. This might have saved a lot of trouble to the resident members and assured more efficient service. But in any case the present system was not a complete failure. There were still some successful co-operatives, but on average their level of efficiency was not high. However, the situation was not hopeless. Perhaps by trial and error, and if more absentees were tempted to return and settle permanently in the area, the system might gather force and prove its worth.

The irrigation of the freehold land presented another difficulty. At present, for reasons stated earlier, there is not sufficient water available for irrigation all the year round. This means that no horticultural crop such as citrus or banana trees can be grown, neither can any *seifi* rotation of vegetables be sown (see p.75). The pumps erected at the Dam site were just powerful enough to ensure summer irrigation for the sugar cane and a supply of drinking water for the town and the Scheme villages. It is expected, however, that with the building of another dam, as is proposed\*, either at Hajar el Zurga, on the Setit river, or at Hakuma gorge on the tributary of the Atbara river, a permanent high head of water could be available upstream of Khashm el Girba Dam, to feed the main canal throughout the year and enable the Nubians to utilise their freehold land fully. Until this scheme is executed, the Nubians will have to be content with two rotations only – the *dameira* and the winter.

#### (iv) *The Local Tribes*

Labour was available for weeding, cotton picking and harvesting ground nuts. The area was still flooded with Westerners† and workers from

\* At the time of going to press, investigation for the building of another dam on the Atbara river had been completed, and a government decision was expected to be taken in 1974.

† Citizens of the Republic of Chad.



other tribes who had been engaged in the construction of villages since the initiation of the Scheme, and who had become semi-settlers. They had built an extensive camp of thatched huts and lived in it during the construction period, and they continued to do so afterwards. The existence of such a squalid lodging area in the middle of the town, marked here and there with flapping flags over *marisa* shops and cottages occupied by young Ethiopian women from across the border, who had brought their sherry and *kolomiet* (Ethiopian wine) with them and offered entertainment and consolation to the regiment of workers, so robbing them of their wages, was very repulsive to the conservative Nubians, who had never been accustomed to such a disorderly way of living. The cry went up when the first batch of Nubians arrived in the town. The removal of these people to another site might have been easy, had the Nubians not provoked and angered them with their outspoken complaints and insults. At first they refused to move and threatened to resist, but later they agreed to move their camp to a new site laid out for them outside the residential area. In spite of the aversion they felt toward the labourers, the Nubians could not do without them during the cultivation season, especially for weeding and picking. At this time of year the Nubians were tolerant towards them, but this attitude changed when the season was over. The local tribes, too, attracted by the good wages during the seasons of harvest and picking, used to come to the Scheme area and offer their services, and they were always selected in preference to the Westerners because they had no need to stay on in the Scheme area. The fact that they would be allowed the grazing on cotton shrubs after picking encouraged many of them to bring their herds to the east bank of the Atbara river, to get some wages by employment in picking and, when the season was over, to drive their herds to browse on the cotton leaves.

These local tribes were not an unmixed blessing. During the first years of the scheme, a lot of damage was caused to the cultivation. Between December and April, when the Butana plain was dry and waterless, the Scheme area was green and wet. The Rashaida and the Hadandawa used to drive their camels across the shallow waters of the Atbara river under cover of darkness, and make them feast themselves on the green cotton leaves. The hungry camels ate cotton fibre as well as leaves, causing much damage to the shrubs. The Shukria and the Ahamda, on the other hand, repeatedly drove their herds across the Scheme area on the pretext of taking them to water at the Atbara river, while in fact a capacious branch escape canal had been dug especially at the outskirts of the western boundary of the Scheme to provide watering for the camels and keep them away from the tenancies.

Even more serious was the theft of cotton by these nomadic tribes.

During the picking season, they used to enter the tenancies at night, load their camels with as many sacks of cotton as they could carry, and steal away before sunrise into the Karab — an eroded plain broken by rough valleys and deep depressions. These caravans were guided through untrodden tracks under cover of the Karab hills to Humra, Umm Hajar or Tessenei, on across the Ethiopian border, where they could find a ready market for their contraband goods. During the first years the smuggling of cotton was so common that the Scheme administration assessed it at 20 per cent of total production. On one of my visits to Eritrea, information I collected confirmed this estimate. Eventually we increased our security forces and gave them facilities to combat smuggling as well as trespass. It proved effective.

#### (v) *Economic and Social Changes*

We will now consider the economic aspect of the Scheme in relation to family income and the revenue from agriculture in the former home. The economic survey carried out by the Department of Statistics in the affected area gave the following figures for the monthly income and expenditure of a rural family:

*Income:* £S 16.294

*Expenditure:* £S 18.783

Thus for the Nubian family income ran short of expenditure. The sources of income were the following: 37 per cent from agriculture; 27 per cent from postal money orders sent by absentee heads of families; 24 per cent from salaries and wages, and 12 per cent from other sources. By simple calculation, the annual income of the rural family from agriculture would realise £S 72.345. This figure included expenditure on agriculture, which could not be found anywhere in the survey.

At Khashm el Girba, income and expenditure in agriculture were governed by the tenancy agreement between the Government and the tenant, which specified the obligations and rights of each party as follows. The Government was to provide the land for cultivation, irrigation and the efficient administration of the scheme. The tenant was to bear the cost of production of the rotation of cotton. The two parties should each bear an equal share of expenditure on the following items (termed 'the joint account'): destruction of thick weeds and harmful grasses; cotton seeds issued for sowing; ploughing and ridging; fertilizers and manures; cotton-spraying and pest control; jute sacks and threads used for packing in the ginning factories; advance payments for picking of cotton; collection of cotton and its weighing and transport to the ginning factories and sales depots; ginning and packing; storage whenever needed; marketing of cotton, including insurance, commission and safety measures; and pulling up and burning of cotton

On 21 April 1965 a very unfortunate incident occurred over the parliamentary poll in Village No. 1, 'Faras West'. The elections were opposed by the People's Democratic Party, who decided to boycott the voting. Some Shukria Arabs, who were enthusiastic followers of that party, raided the polling station with their sharp and heavy swords, turning the gathering into a bloody massacre. Sirri Ahmed, the returning officer, together with five policemen and two drivers, was killed, and Omda Salah Dahab lost his right hand and suffered other serious wounds. The police, belatedly realising the danger, opened fire on the raiders, killing one of them and causing the rest to run for safety. The raiders were later arrested and tried.

This hostile incursion greatly disturbed the Nubians, but there was no panic. Their good relations with the Shukria were shaken for some time, but later, when they realised that the Shukria also regretted the incident, confidence was restored.

In the first week of July 1966, I paid my first visit to the area, a few days after my arrival on transfer as Governor, Kassala Province. As soon as I had unpacked my baggage, I hurried to see my old Nubian friends. Since they had left me in old Wadi Halfa, I had followed their news with interest and concern, but the last time I had seen their new home was when I accompanied the batch from Sarra. I was greatly moved by their kind reception. They seemed as keen to see me as I was to see them. Every one of them insisted that I should visit his village, as indeed I was impatient to do. Eventually I toured the whole area from Faras to Degheim, spending as much time as I could in each village. I was glad to see that they had settled well and that conditions had improved. Their houses were as orderly and their villages as clean as ever. The dwellings had modern furniture, and many had the blessing of refrigerators and butane gas stoves, particularly in New Halfa town. No mud bins for the storage of wheat could be seen in houses, but instead wheat sacks were stacked high on some verandahs; all this indicated a higher standard of living. Their children had more schools and they looked well-fed and chubby. Their general state of health had improved and Dr. Ibrahim Suliman, the medical officer of health, informed me that the birth rate had risen by 30 per cent. This was due partly to the fact that many absentee husbands had returned and finally settled in the area, and partly to the medical care and attention the emigrants were finding in their new home. The main snag was the absence of permanent roads which caused difficulty during the rainy season. The villages at this time of the year were only accessible *via* the high road on the main canal or the gravel road running parallel to the eastern canal.

New Halfa town impressed me with its modern planning and standard of building. The central circular open space previously designed by Kocks had been replaced by a wide open square facing the

local council building, in the centre of which was a large mosque with a high minaret. The council and post office were in splendid buildings overlooking the town centre. The market too was well laid out, and the rows of shops had small spaces between them, instead of being back to back, as at Old Halfa with their timber screens wretchedly hanging over their doors. Here the shops were spacious, with stores attached, and wide arcades with pillars and concrete roofing shading the fronts. The foundations of all shops were designed to carry an upper floor, and many owners had already made hotel buildings by adding living quarters above their shops. Yet all the shops were full of goods and local produce, and their arcades swarmed with Nubian customers and local buyers. The north-west end of the town contained the beautiful buildings of the hospital, irrigation and agriculture colonies. Two new industries were under construction — a ginning factory on the north-east side and the tenants' co-operative flour mill to the south-east.

Trees were absent from the whole resettlement area. The town and villages, lacking the green touches of foliage, looked harsh and bare, especially during hot weather. I initiated a scheme with the Forests Department for the provision of 30,000 tree shoots which were distributed in a great 'tree celebration'. All the Nubian men, and even schoolboys, contributed by preparing the pits and connecting them with branch canals for irrigation. To please the Nubians by giving them a touch of their old home, I ordered 800 date shoots from the Atbara District, for planting alongside the main road of the town. When they grow up they will provide more shoots for planting either at the sides of other roads or in the courtyards of houses.

Three important services were still lacking; airport, cinema and football stadium. At the initiation of the Scheme a small airstrip of compact gravel was built at Khashm el Girba, to facilitate transport of the personnel of the government departments and firms engaged in the Scheme construction. These firms and departments established their headquarters at Khashm el Girba, but when the Scheme was completed, the firms left, while the departments moved their offices to New Halfa town. Nobody was left in Khashm el Girba to use the air service, and the residents of New Halfa were discouraged by the road journey of 50-odd km. to Khashm el Girba, particularly during the rainy season when the service was most needed. The shifting of the air service to New Halfa town was therefore an obvious necessity. Later I submitted a scheme to the Department of Civil Aviation to the effect that an airport should be built near New Halfa town not only for the reasons stated above, but because New Halfa town was on the direct route from Khartoum to Kassala. The site had already been approved in the deposited plan of the town, near Sasareib, where gravel was available in abundance.

In old Wadi Halfa there had been a cinema, crudely built during the Second World War to provide entertainment for troops on their way to North Africa. After the war, the building was taken over by the local council, who rented it to a certain Sayed Hamid, one of the Basalwa notables, who had run it satisfactorily ever since. When the emigration was complete and more tribal people had settled in the scheme area, the need for a decent cinema was felt by everybody. Led by one of their active members, Mohamed Hassan Atitalla, the tenants formed a local cinema company and raised the necessary funds through shares, and the building of a good cinema house was completed in 1973.

The old stadium of Wadi Halfa was assessed at a generous rate and £S 6000 was paid to the Football Association, so that they could build a new stadium in New Halfa Town, where the building costs were far higher than in old Halfa. They adopted the plan and estimates for Gedaref new stadium, but found that the money in hand was still short of the cost of construction. The gap was filled by a loan approved by the Ministry of Information. A good site was approved for the purpose and a stadium had just been completed when this book went to press.

In spite of the good standard of planning and building of the villages, no attempt had been made to provide them with electric power. The turbine at Khashm el Girba Dam was generating 7000 kw., which was more than sufficient for the requirements of the Scheme area, Gedaref and Kassala towns. The development budget of the Scheme had provided for electric connections to the main town only; this had been included in the contract of Messrs. Turriff, as mentioned earlier. But the extension of the power to the villages had not been taken into account, except for the building of transformers at convenient spots on the high tension line opposite to the villages. Only poles and wire were needed to link the villages to the current. In 1969 I submitted a proposal to the Central Electricity and Water Administration (CEWA), for the connection of the current to all the villages in the resettlement area. The inhabitants were ready to meet the cost of internal connections if the current was linked to their houses; and there was no doubt that they felt tantalised and vexed at having the high tension line passing through their villages while the energy stayed out of their reach. They would definitely need electricity for lighting, ventilation, refrigeration and any domestic industry. CEWA, however, reacted favourably, and agreed to connect four villages in the northern sector of the resettlement area, as a pilot scheme. By 1970 these four villages were linked to the extension line going to the sugar factory, and for the first time the Nubian villager lit his house with electric bulbs.

At the time of writing, the civil aviation authorities are considering building a landing strip at Sasareib.

By this time the Nubians had spent six years in their new home, and their life had begun to take a settled shape. In this short period they had started to adapt their lives to the new environment in various ways. Although the memory of their old home, especially among the old, is still green, there is no cry for a return to old Wadi Halfa. Their new surroundings and new ecology had no doubt brought about changes in their life, but because of their deeply-rooted traditions and the great influence of their tribalism, the process of change would naturally be very slow. The slight changes noticed to date may be summarised as follows: First, the young women had given up their traditional costume, the *gargar*, and taken to wearing the ordinary saris, *tobs*, worn by women in the central Sudan. Old women stuck to their Nubian *gargar* with certain modifications to the trailing edge because of the muddy soil during the wet season. A few men also adopted the dress of the Hadandawa as a fashion, and were to be seen with their loose trousers, waistcoats and turbans, like the young men of Timintai.

Secondly, marriages are still governed by Nubian tradition, but the dowries have risen to hundreds of pounds. A gift of a gold ring, a watch and some clothes has also been introduced to mark an engagement. Wedding parties become more rich and lavish, and wedding houses are decorated with coloured lights. Modern music and dancing have also found their way to new Nubia.

Thirdly, the Nubians have started to develop a taste for the *kisra* and *weika*, a dish made of okra powder, eaten with *dura* bread baked into thin layers like pastry. In Wadi Halfa they used to call this 'inferior food of the Sudanese'.

Fourthly they have dropped the Egyptian words for directions, such as *bahri* and *gubli* for north and south, and adopted the normal Sudanese words *shimal* and *jenub*. Some of them have started to use the tribal terms, such as *safil* and *saied*. They have also dropped the Coptic calendar which governed the cultivation seasons in their old home, and begun to use the local Arab stellar calendar, in which the year is divided into four seasons, and every season is further divided into seven *eynas*, each *eyna* covering  $13\frac{1}{4}$  days. Each *eyna* is governed by the disappearance of certain stars behind the sun, and ends when the star is visible just before sunrise. The most important *eynas* for the Nubian were those of the rainy season, the *kharif*. They begin with *El Dura*, which is governed by Procyon in Canis Minor (*El Shuara el Shamia*); then the *Natra*, which is Cancer (*El Sarataan*); followed by *El Tarfa*, *El Ganha* and *El Keirasan*, all stars in the constellation of Leo; *El Sarfa* which is governed by the fuzzy part of Coma Berenices; and ending with *El Iwa* and *El Simak* which are Arcturus; *El Samak el Aazal* in the

constellation of the Plough, and Spica, *El Simak*\*, in the constellation of Virgo. Moreover they learned to predict rainfall from the direction of distant lightning. So *El Barig el Abbadi* – i.e. a distant flash of lightning in the east – would most certainly bring rain, while flashes in other directions would turn it away. They also got to know that in May, when *El Tirya*, the Pleiades, sink behind the sun, the hottest *eyna* begins.

They have started to realise the blessings of the rainy season and the important role it plays in their agriculture. Instead of their fear of the rains and thunderstorms, they developed a liking for them. When I first visited their area I found them complaining at the undue delay of the rains in that season.

A final point of note was that local beds lined with date branch sticks are no longer used. Steel-framed beds with wire springs are common in every house.

Many important people were no longer there. Nazir Salhein had died of heart disease in New Halfa in 1965, and Barbis had died of cancer at Aswan. The market had lost many good merchants. Mohamed Ali Ibrahim, the leading Nubian merchant, together with Ali Hasaballa Lashin of the Eleigat, and the late Nasr Shibben, the best Syrian merchant, had preferred to settle in Khartoum. Of the Egyptian merchants, Yahya Abdel Ghafur Abu Zeid and Khueilid had left the Sudan and settled in Aswan. Other Nubians – Sheikh Mohamed Ahmed Awad, Abdel Rahim Mahmoud and Abu Ros Ayoub – preferred to stay in old Wadi Halfa. The large and well-known family of Sherif Daud had also settled in Khartoum.

The area had received the close attention of successive governments. A high-ranking official or a minister was always touring the area. Heads of successive governments had also visited the Resettlement Scheme. Prime Minister Sayed El Sadig el Mahdi, and the late Sayed Ismail el Azhari, President of the Supreme Council, had toured the place; and President Numeiry has so far paid six visits of inspection to the New Halfa area.

The experience of such a large-scale and organised emigration and resettlement is new to the Sudan, and the experiment is still in its early stage. The Nubians will need a long time to adapt themselves from their

\* I have put eight *eynas* for the rainy season. In the Southern reach of the Savannah belt, where early rains are common, the *eyna* of El Dura is included in the Kharif and the El Simak is omitted; while in the northern belt, where rains are late, the rainy season usually starts with El Natra and ends with El Simak.





41. Visit by President Numeiry to New Halfa

old society to their new environment. The existing generation, born and bred in old Wadi Halfa, may not find it easy to digest the change; the memory of their old home still lives with them and will continue to do so for a long time to come. The bond and fidelity which attached them to their place of birth will influence their emotions and recollections for at least a generation. It is only the coming generation, the age-group of Hamad who was born in the train *en route* to Khashm el Girba, that will have no bond or association with old Halfa, and will owe full allegiance to the new home and take life there for granted.

(vi) *Those who stayed behind*

The residents of old Halfa area constituted a malignant problem for successive governments. They picked a quarrel with Abboud's government over the issue of Khashm el Girba, and decided to stay by the shore of the lake near their submerged country. Attempts by their own relatives to persuade them to emigrate failed completely, and advice from the Government was ignored.

They were evidently not the first people to resist in such a situation. The history of migration shows similar precedents. Their own relatives, the Kunuz, whose country had been devastated as a result of the two heightenings of the Aswan Dam, had refused a gesture by King Fuad of



Egypt to resettle them at Kom Ombo, and had built their villages on top of the rocky banks of the Nile. When Jebel Awlia Dam was built across the White Nile, the inhabitants of Giteina village, who had lost their villages and their agricultural land, refused to emigrate to an alternative livelihood scheme planned for them at Abu Guta in the vicinity of their area, and preferred to build their village on the sand dunes dumped behind their drowned village. Such is human nature, and it would have been rather foolish to expect that in a mass emigration like the Nubian, a particular area would suit everybody, and that all the affected people would agree to move to it, be it Khashm el Girba, Abu Guta or paradise itself. The sentimental ties are always there, and in all cases there will be some individuals or groups who yield to their emotions and view the issue subjectively. For this reason the Government wisely decided not to make the emigration to Khashm el Girba compulsory.

The main difficulty of the situation in old Halfa was that the ultimate deadline reduced level of 182 (survey datum) of the reservoir lake which was supposed to be reached by the rising waters in seven years' time, lay nearly 24 km. away from the river bank. The final site for their resettlement was therefore far from the source of water and well above it, and it would therefore not be habitable until then. In the meantime they had constantly to be moving to higher ground with the water following at their heels. They lived in temporary dwellings built of wooden railway sleepers, which had to be dismantled each time the water approached and erected again at a reasonable distance, only to wait for another rise in the water level to be demolished again. They endured years of hardship in this mobile state. The poverty of some of the families added to the difficulties of the situation. When I checked their names in the compensation lists, I found that the total entitlement of some families did not exceed £S 70. They must have lived at starvation level before they received aid from the F.A.O.

On 30 March 1967, after more than three years of toil and sufferings, the Government decided to revive the town of Wadi Halfa at the shore of the lake. The decision was passed to the Minister of Communications for study and execution. A seven-man committee was formed, composed of leading Nubians who were concerned about the issue, under the presidency of Sayed Salih Mohamed Tahir, an ex-governor of a province. The members included Sayed Daud Abd el Latif, Sayed Mohamed Tawfig and Sayed Salih Mahmoud Ismail. The committee covered a wide field of useful work and contacted some thirty ministries and departments, obtaining concrete proposals for their contribution to the resurrection of Wadi Halfa. On 30 April 1967 the

Minister of Communications, accompanied by the members of the committee and heads of departments, paid their first visit to the area, met the inhabitants and discussed the whole issue with them.

On 25 August 1967 another visit was made by the same deputation for the purpose of affirming to the people that the Government was giving due consideration to their demands and to agree on an alternative site for the new town, on the basis of which the heads of departments would prepare for the constructional work. The area was also visited by a Hungarian mission, who were interested in their 'relatives', the Magarab tribe, and made some investigations into their conditions.

On 23 February 1968 a U.N. deputation, headed by Professor White, visited the area and later held a meeting with the heads of departments, in which they discussed the ways and means of exploiting the natural resources of the lake.

The report recommended that the following should be thoroughly examined: all aquatic life in the lake, whether flora or fauna, and the effect of the high waters on it; fish resources, with a view to selecting suitable sites for fisheries; fishing methods, the relation of the different species of fish to each other, and (for fish feeding) the magnitude of water weeds and organic substances suspended in the water; the likely area of *gurus* land that would emerge annually when the water level receded during the months of drought; the changes expected to follow the creation of the lake — notably the breeding of mosquito, bilharzia snails and sandflies (with methods for their control); weather changes resulting from the high rate of evaporation on the lake surface; seepage of water into the banks of the lake; and social and economic changes expected to affect the lives of the inhabitants following from the alteration of the environmental conditions. Suitably qualified experts were to be recommended for undertaking these investigations.

Meanwhile, the government departments had started to provide the essential services to the inhabitants in order to ease their difficult situation as far as possible, pending the planning and execution of the final scheme for settlement when the water would approach its permanent area. The Ministry of Works extended clear water supply throughout the unsettled years of transition, and in 1968, when the final site was selected, they linked the residential area to a water line fed from the railway tank. Government service buildings were supplied with electricity at this time. The Fisheries Department sent a team of experts to train the inhabitants in modern fishing methods, and in techniques of dehydrating fish for export. Their tentative survey confirmed that fish breeding was rich and of good quality.

The Ministry of Local Government, in collaboration with the Survey Department, completed the plan of the new town, pegged out the

layout and distributed 3,297 residential plots to the inhabitants for development. A small hospital was built of temporary materials on the permanent site, and the medical service was run by a qualified doctor. The Ministry of Health included £S 30,000 in their development budget for building a proper hospital, with two big wards and a theatre. There were two elementary schools for boys and girls and one intermediate school for boys. Aided by the Ministry of Education, the inhabitants built an intermediate school for girls and another elementary school for boys was under way. All were built of temporary materials.

The Ministry of Irrigation defined on land the deadline level of 182 metres in good time to enable completion of the constructional works on the permanent site well ahead of the rising tide of the lake.

In 1968 the Forestry Department distributed shoots of date trees and other wood shoots to the inhabitants for planting at the permanent site, while the Ministry of Agriculture carried out a soil survey in the area in order to assess its suitability for the different rotations and citrus fruits.

The Post and Telegraph Offices claimed credit for continuous functioning without interruption or failure since shifting to the airport in September 1964.

The Archaeological Department decided to contribute a small museum equipped with Nubian relics.

The Ministry of Animal Resources proposed to build an animal quarantine big enough to hold 60,000 head per season on their way to Egypt. They also undertook to introduce poultry and dairy farming in the area.

The Ministry of Foreign Trade is now waiting for the water to reach its final level to arrange for building new harbour quays and a customs house.

The Railway Department offered invaluable services by erecting a water tank and providing the inhabitants with much needed sleepers for the construction of their temporary shelters.

Lastly the Food and Agriculture Organization of the U.N. kindly included the inhabitants of Old Halfa in their aid programme.

On 2 October 1969 President Numeiry drove all the way down from Dongola to Wadi Halfa, accompanied by the Ministers of Animal Resources, Education, Health and Rural Development and Co-operatives. He had a good reception from all the inhabitants who had last seen a Head of State when President Abboud paid his famous visit on 6 December 1959. He talked to the people and inquired into their problems on the spot. Before his departure on 3 October the inhabitants handed him a long petition containing their urgent demands.

At the time I am finishing this narrative, the inhabitants of Wadi Halfa have already built their houses in the Nubian style and started to settle in their new small town by the shore of the lake, still at the terminus of the Railway overlooking the high waves splashing over the site of their old town. It will be some time before their economic life becomes stabilised. Until the water reaches its final contour their *guruf* land will not be defined and the shoots of their date trees will require a further decade to attain optimum bearing. It will take some time also for the harbour to be built and the regular connection between the Sudan and Egypt to take shape; but until then the existing limited service will continue to be carried out by the reconditioned *Ibis* and a small boat put into service by the Egyptians. The long-awaited small ships of the Egyptians do not seem to be forthcoming as the whole issue is linked with the deadline for the water reaching its final level, which had already become overdue. The water level is still low.

The peculiar aspect of the new Wadi Halfa is that it will be quite isolated by the desert from the Sukkot and Mahas area. Except for the lake it will look like an oasis in the desert, quite cut off from the rest of the world. The only hope is that the emergence of *guruf* land around the shore of the lake between Wadi Halfa and Dal will attract the people of Sukkot and Mahas, who suffer from land shortage, to come down, occupy the shores of the lake and fill that empty space.

Whatever happens in the future, I think the troubles suffered by these people in their unyielding struggle against natural difficulties will call forth the good wishes of everyone for a happy life.





## PART III

## THE EXHUMATION OF HISTORY

While preparations for the emigration were in progress, another unique activity, also of great importance, had begun: the exhumation and removal of historic relics and monuments of the ancient civilisations in Sudanese Nubia which were either partly excavated or still remained buried under the sand.

Since the plans for building the High Dam were announced in Egypt, the Sudan Government had become aware of the danger to which all the relics not previously excavated were exposed. In Sudanese Nubia, unlike Egypt, the traces of civilizations from the Stone Age to the conquest campaign of Ismail Pasha in 1820 had remained untouched, except for the excavation at the beginning of this century of parts of Pharaonic fortifications. The Sudan Government had therefore raised the danger signal and appealed for international help to rescue these buried treasures of Nubia. The scale of the operation was beyond the means of the Sudan, both technically and financially, and because the knowledge to be obtained from excavation would be of world-wide use and the possibility of rescue was limited to a short period, the call for international help was fully justified.

The call was met by an immediate response from Unesco who took in hand the salvaging of all the relics in Sudanese Nubia as well as those remaining in Upper Egypt behind the reservoir lake. In Egyptian Nubia the situation was different, as the building of the Aswan Dam and its two heightenings had given a spur to excavations there, which were completed in 1931. However, the two great temples of Ramses II at Abu Simbel, which were threatened by the High Dam waters, had presented an unparalleled problem both to archaeologists and engineers. On 4 December 1958, Unesco launched an appeal for donations throughout the world to secure the necessary funds for the rescue of the ancient monuments and the excavations of relics within the area of the reservoir lake. An international committee of patrons was formed for the purpose, under the chairmanship of King Gustav VI Adolf of Sweden. Prince Sadr el Din Aga Khan was appointed as a special adviser to the Director-General of Unesco on all aspects of the operation. He visited the Sudan in 1960.



On 8 March 1960 the Central Committee of Unesco met in Paris to inaugurate a world-wide campaign to collect the necessary contributions. The meeting, presided over by the French Minister of Culture, was attended by representatives of all member-countries and the heads of diplomatic missions in Paris. The representatives of the Sudan and Egypt were in attendance and the Sudan Minister of Education, Sayed Ziada Osman Arbab, made a statement on behalf of the Sudan Government.

During all this time the Department of Archaeology was gathering its strength for the great operation. All its activities in other parts of the country were suspended and the staff were directed to Wadi Halfa. Their preparation plan was a big enough job in itself, covering two fields of activity. The first of these was a scientific archaeological survey of the whole of the affected area in order to locate the ancient sites, determine their type and assess their size. This was done by general observation of the topography of the area surveyed, to distinguish the artificial and natural features of the probable sites. Whenever such a site was located it was entered on a register, and in most cases a sample excavation was carried out to determine its historical period, extent and general condition. To provide a good basis for this research, the Survey Department had carried out an extensive aerial survey of the area at three different levels in 1959: the wide-angle photographs taken from a high altitude were used in the preparation of archaeological maps, which had not been available till then. The survey taken at medium height was useful in the location of the probable excavation sites, as it had shown some features of the ground surface at certain places, which indicated the existence of some archaeological remains. These were usually tested by careful investigation to confirm or otherwise that antiquities were present where they appeared to be. Finally the survey taken from a low altitude was confined to the known archaeological sites of importance in the area. This was a great help to missions in preparing their maps and their plans of campaign.

The archaeological map was prepared by two energetic Unesco experts W. Y. Adams and A. Mills, and later, when funds were available, a set of photogrammetric cards, which was essential for the reconstruction of the temples, was made. Moreover effective use was made of the aerial photos by composing a big mosaic map of them, to be used with the archaeological map. The rest of the photocopies were indexed according to their sequence on the mosaic map, and kept in a separate file for field work. When a new site was discovered it was entered in the photo card by inserting a hole into it and drawing a circle around the hole at the back of the mosaic bearing the site number. Thus all the relic sites could be registered and located without spoiling the sensitised coated face of the card on which the picture was taken.

When the mosaic was exposed to rear lighting, all the sites were revealed to the viewer at a glance.

The second aspect of the preparatory plan concerned the dismantling of four Middle Kingdom temples – Buhen, Aksha, Semna East and Semna West – and a unique tomb in Dibeira East. They had to be taken down in sections and then transferred to Khartoum, for re-erection in the National Museum. Photogrammetric plates had to be taken of them, and all the stone sections had to be index-numbered so that they could be reconstructed. Paintings were found on the walls of the ancient churches which had to be carefully stripped from the walls and then taken to be preserved in Khartoum. Drawings and inscriptions on the bare rock of hillsides had to be documented and photographed.

The Sudan Government had secured the co-operation of Unesco in forming an advisory committee of experts for the rescue operation in Sudanese Nubia. Their first meeting was held in Khartoum on 3–10 October 1960, presided over by the Assistant Director of Unesco. The Committee visited Wadi Halfa where they toured all the sites in the area which contained relics and decided on the list of priorities for the work. In 1962 the advisory committee held a meeting at Wadi Halfa, under the chairmanship of the Minister of Education, which considered a detailed report from the Director of the Department of Archaeology, Sayed Thabit Hassan Thabit, embodying the essential features of the rescue operation. The report mainly concerned the dismantling of the four temples and the tomb at Dibeira, their transfer to Khartoum and their reconstruction there. The importance of stripping all the paintings from the walls of churches and documenting inscriptions and rock pictures was also stressed. The meeting decided that models should be built of some important monuments originally built of mud bricks as these could not be moved. Finally, it was decided to establish an office in Khartoum for the registration of all relics and monuments on the lines of the one in Cairo.

The Committee laid down the procedure to be followed by the missions that would undertake the excavation, and discussed their commitments for the success of the operation and the publicity of their progress reports in accordance with their agreement with the Sudan Government. It was decided that an anthropologist should be appointed so that the excavation missions could make use of his experience and knowledge in their research.

### *(i) Beginning of the Operation*

As a result of the call made by the Sudan Government for international assistance and the co-operation of Unesco, many foreign archaeological

missions applied to participate in the rescue operation in Sudanese Nubia. In 1960 six missions had already started excavating in the area; their numbers had soon increased to a total of twenty-two missions from seventeen countries. Most of the missions made fresh discoveries.

To give a short survey of the programme executed during that hectic period, I have condensed the official publications of the Department of Archaeology and recorded some of my personal observations when I was in Wadi Halfa. The work can be divided into two complementary aspects; those undertaken respectively by the Department of Archaeology and by the foreign missions under the supervision and direction of the Department.

We will discuss first the programme executed by the Department of Archaeology. The part of its archaeological survey was initiated in the stretch of the river from Faras in the north to Gemai in the south, which was threatened by the first phase of storage in the High Dam reservoir lake. This was done partly by the Survey Department and partly through the help of the two Unesco experts mentioned earlier. The photogrammetric survey was made by two Belgian experts in the period from November 1959 to May 1962, and led to the discovery of several hundred unknown sites, in a reach only 60 km long. These sites were carefully sorted out and the Department undertook to excavate all the sites which were unlikely to be worked on by the foreign missions.

The survey was then continued in the rest of the affected area south of Gemai, and 240 new sites were located, all of which were excavated by the Department. This work occupied them till May 1969, and valuable relics were recovered which were added to the exhibits of our National Museum.

The major sites excavated by the Department were the following:

*(a) North of Buhen*

Very important cemeteries were found in this area, the history of which went back to the age of the 'A group'. The graves were found in good condition and the relics buried with the dead were intact. The important historical discovery resulting from these excavations lay in the relation which could be traced between the 'A group' civilisation and what was called by A. J. Arkell 'the Stone Age civilisation of Khartoum'. The work on this site was completed in 1962.

*(b) Kasanarti Island*

This island was at the head of the Second Cataract, 25 km from Wadi Halfa. The excavations revealed the existence of relics belonging to the Meroitic age ('X group') and remains of the Christian era. This work was carried out in two months, ending on 2 February 1963.

*(c) Meinarti Island*

This was one of the most rewarding sites, the island being at the tail of the Second Cataract, 10 km south of Halfa. It had long been reckoned one of the most notable Christian settlements in Nubia, and the excavations confirmed this theory. Very valuable relics were found, spanning the Meroitic age, the Christian era, and the dawn of Islam in Nubia. The remains of these civilisations were found in layers one on top of the other. In addition, 1241 ancient artifacts were found, among them some of the most beautiful pottery ever found in Nubia.

The excavations on this island were crowned by the discovery of an ancient church with paintings and frescoes, and some inscriptions in Nubian. The work on this site took 250 workers seventeen months.

*(ii) Dismantling and Transfer of Temples*

The dismantling and transfer of the temples of Aksha, Buhen and Semna and the Dibeira tomb presented a very difficult problem to the Department of Archaeology. All were in a weak structural state and in varying stages of decay. Buhen temple, the largest and by far the best preserved, was only a portion of the original temple, and at Aksha little remained beyond scattered fragments of crumbling sandstone; what remained of its walls and pillars stood half sunk in sand dunes. Dr. Harold J. Plenderleith\* was of the opinion that these temples could not be saved, and that the one at Aksha would turn to powder the moment it was moved. The Department of Archaeology finally decided that their stone structures had to be reinforced with chemicals, and treated with preservatives to protect them against the climate in Khartoum. These measures were taken under the supervision of F. W. Hinkel, a Unesco expert from East Germany. The temples under review were:

*(a) Aksha*, built by Ramses II, the great builder of Abu Simbel (1290–1224 B.C.). It was of sandstone, dedicated to his living image. In 1961 this temple was found to be more or less completely dilapidated, as just mentioned. Except for the west wall it was beyond rescue, but the reliefs and inscriptions on that wall were of considerable historical value: they consisted of lists (on the north side) of the lower countries and (on the south) of the upper countries which Ramses conquered. A fresco of captives with their hands tied behind them signified their submission to his rule. The delicate job of stripping the walls into sections and packing them took twenty-five days; by the end

\* Director, International Centre for the Study of the Preservation of Cultural Property.

of January 1963 they were ready for despatch to the east bank. On 24 March the packed stones were taken by boat to Wadi Halfa and from there sent by rail to Khartoum. In 1968 this wall was re-erected at the west end of the National Museum within a shed consisting of steel columns and galvanised iron sheeting, all resting on wheels and rails so that it could be moved out into the open.

(b) *Buhen*, the largest and by far the most important temple in the affected area, originally built by Queen Hatshepsut (1490–1468 B.C.), who dedicated it to Horus, the falcon-headed god, Lord of Buhen. Her successor, Tutmosis III, erased her name and replaced it with his own; not only that but he altered the original design and defaced the cartouches and the portrait of the Queen.

The plan of this temple followed the traditional design, being divided into two main sections, the forecourt and the temple proper. The forecourt was on the east side and occupied nearly a third of the whole temple area. The main gate, which was slightly to the south of the central axis, opened directly on to the west bank of the Nile and led into the forecourt, which was an open rectangle surrounded by two rows of columns. This forecourt was an extension to the original temple and was built by Tutmosis III, and the columns were carved with the cartouches of Ramses III, IV and V.

The main temple was divided into six compartments, and the first compartment to be entered from the east was the coronation hall. The north room was decorated with a fresco of Tutmosis II kneeling before the god, who placed his hand on his shoulder. The southern wall was engraved with a relief of a cow licking her calf while another cow and a bull stood beside it: these represented offerings to the god. From this hall there were two doors, that on the north leading to a long narrow room, and the other to the Sacred Barque chamber. Its north wall bore many cartouches of Tutmosis III with offerings of cows and vases of wine to the 'Lord of Buhen'.

The walls of the rear chamber were painted with fine ceremonial scenes in colour. Here the defacement made by Tutmosis III to the figure of Queen Hatshepsut was quite clear.

On the southern mud-brick boundary wall of the temple, there was a notable relief of the famous Kushite king, Taharka. His flat nose, thick lips and cylindrical crown could be seen quite distinctly. Evidently this relief was carved after the Kushites had sacked the city of Buhen, and signified the redoubtable authority of Taharka over the place.

I visited Buhen while the temple was being dismantled, to see the method being used for the safe removal of the big shafts of the forecourt columns and the solid walls of the temple itself. I was

surprised to find the whole temple completely buried under a huge mound of sand, with only the tops of the columns visible. There were two earth ramps at a gentle slope; one on the southern side led from the peak of the mound to the river bank, where a smooth causeway of timber boards bridged the space from the end of the ramp to the deck of the ferry. The other ramp had been built on the west side, connecting the top of the sand hill with a heap of sand accumulated from previous excavations. This ramp was used for a light railway to bring up sand, to provide a cushion of varying depths according to the level of the column sections that were removed.

Before the temple was dismantled, the reliefs and temple stones were strengthened, under the direction of Dr. Plenderleith. The next step was to clear the structure of all birds' nests, wasps and modern cement deposits — this was done with a sharp knife. The joints of stone blocks were also cleaned. Then all the carved and painted reliefs were brushed with a solution of flakes of shellac dissolved in alcohol. Weak plaster was applied with cotton voile, after being brushed with an adhesive solution, 'Cellofas B'. The shellac was allowed twenty-four hours to dry before plaster was applied, after which all the rock joints were cut with a sharp knife to clear the cloth from the rock segments.\*

The following procedure was adopted for the removal of the big shafts of the columns. The column sections were found to have a space at the core into which the ancient Egyptian masons had inserted wooden logs to tie the sections together. To raise one column section from the sections below it the workers would pull out the log, widen the hole and insert into it a steel rod with hooks that bit into its inner wall. A chain connected to a winch with differential pulleys was tied to the rod, and the section would then slowly be raised before being carefully laid on the sand cushion and rolled down the ramp to the river bank. There it was packed up by fixing two square mahogany boards at its two ends and tying them together with four screw bars at the corners. The packed section was then slid on to the narrow timber causeway to the ferry barge, in an upright position.

When all the upper sections had been removed, the sand was cleared off the top of the mound to reveal the lower sections, which were in turn removed. This practical and efficient method of dismantling the temple was similar to the process whereby the ancient Egyptians had originally built their temples. It was successfully applied to the three other temples in the affected area. The operation of removing Buhen temple took four whole months. All the stones were numbered and catalogued, and the temple was measured photogrammetrically by the

\* *Kush* No. 8, 1960 — article by Professor Emery.

Belgian experts. The stone cargo was taken to Khartoum in open railway wagons and the reconstruction in the garden of the National Museum was completed in 1969.

As Buhen temple was large, the shed sheltering it was built of three recessed sections of steel columns and galvanised sheeting resting on wheels and rail, folding into each other like the pleated leather of an old Kodak camera, so that they could be rolled back whenever the temple needed to be exposed to the sky.

(c) *Semna. Semna West* temple was an L-shaped structure, consisting of a single chamber, with a wall protruding from the main block. It was supposedly built by Tutmosis III on the foundations of a temple originally built by Senusert III.\* This temple, like that of Semna East (Kuma), was situated within a formidable fort, built to guard the southern frontier of the Middle Kingdom. The walls of the temple at Semna West were all carved with frescoes and cartouches of Tutmosis III and Senusert III presenting offerings to Dedwan, the god of Nubia. It was considered one of the best-preserved free-standing temples of the pre-Ptolemaic period in the whole Nile Valley.

*Semna East (Kuma)* temple was on the east bank of the river, opposite its counterpart. This temple, which was larger than Semna West, was originally built by Queen Hatshepsut and extended by her successors Tutmosis III and Amenophis II during the period 1490–1410 B.C. Its dedication was to the ram-headed god Khuum. It was built of sandstone presumed to have been imported from Sai Island, some 112 km. south of Semna. There was a mud-brick boundary wall, and three sides of the main temple structure formed part of it. The fourth side of the temple, which faced south, comprised two square pillars and two monolithic columns in a row, of which the purpose was evidently to support the forecourt roof. This temple contained about sixteen scenes engraved on the walls, showing Tutmosis III and Amenophes II in different attitudes with the ram-headed god Khuum. As at Buhen, the defaced reliefs of Queen Hatshepsut were to be seen.

These two temples were dismantled and transported to Wadi Halfa by motor trucks in 1964, and then sent by rail to Khartoum, where they were erected in the National Museum, beside the Buhen and Aksha temples, and, like them, sheltered by sheds.

(d) *Dibeira Tomb*. This was the rock-hewn tomb of the Nubian prince Djehuty-hetep. Being the earliest decorated rock tomb in the

\* Leslie Greener, *High Dam over Nubia*, p. 88.

Sudan, it was considered of special importance. The tomb was one mile away from the Nile at the village of Dibeira, some 14 kms. north of Wadi Halfa town. The tomb and its carved reliefs were so Egyptian in style that it would have been taken for an Egyptian tomb, but for the name and title of the prince. Professor Säve-Söderbergh, the head of the Joint Scandinavian Mission, who worked on the records of the tomb, remarked that it presented convincing evidence that the Egyptianisation of the Nubian chieftains was already well advanced at the time it was built, so that it was difficult to distinguish between the Egyptians proper and the Nubians enrolled in the administration. The tomb was dedicated to Queen Hatshepsut, the Lady of the Two Lands.

The tomb itself consisted of a rectangular room of 6 x 4 metres, with a ramp facing west, towards the river. A small rectangular shrine was cut into the east wall of the rectangular hall, in which four stone figures were seated. These figures were in such a poor state of preservation that they could not be moved. A doorway in the south wall of the hall led to the tomb itself, which was in a shaft at the bottom of which was a square chamber in which several painted wooden coffins were found.

All the walls of the tomb chamber were decorated with very fine reliefs of the Nubian prince, with other figures, men or gods, representing certain aspects of his life, explained in carved hieroglyphics. In 1963 it was cut into sections and sent to the Museum in Khartoum, where its re-erection was completed in 1970.

Besides the four temples and the Dibeira tomb, the Department of Archaeology also saved some important steles. One of these, on an isolated rock at Faras, represented the Viceroy Setau and his wife standing before King Ramses II, adoring and worshipping him. Another, which was dug out of Abu Sir rock, bore the names of Tutmoses II and Amenhalep. A third stele, considered a most important historical document, was found at Jebel Suliman, on the west bank opposite Degheim village. It recorded that the ancient Egyptians had conquered Nubia during the reign of King Dejr (3000 B.C.), the third king of the First Dynasty. This was the earliest inscription ever found in Nubia.

### *(iii) The Work of Foreign Archaeological Missions*

Six missions were working on their sites in 1960; by 1962 their number had risen to twenty-two, from all corners of the world. The two banks of the Nile in the affected area were subjected to more intensive excavation than anywhere else in the world at any time. Digging was in progress everywhere — in open spaces, in cemeteries, under sand dunes, churches and temples, and at times under the houses actually occupied



by the Nubians. The whole area was found so full of ancient remains that one could say that the buried treasures over which the Nubians were living might never have become known had the High Dam not been built.

It is impossible to assess the material results of the great work undertaken by the foreign missions; and the same can be said of their historical value. Their findings will have more weight and significance for the generations to come. I shall record briefly the work of each mission and the relics they found. Detailed reports of the work of these missions have been published in *Kush*, to which I advise any scholar interested in this rare operation to refer. My purpose here is simply to give the reader an idea of what was going on.

### *(a) The Polish Mission*

This was one of the missions which made very important discoveries. In 1960 the Department of Archaeology granted them a licence to excavate the ancient site at Faras West, and on 2 February 1961 they started work under the leadership of Professor K. Michalowski.

The site was one of many sand hills that lay on the river bank east of Faras village, with nothing especially noteworthy about it. On top of it was a room built of crude stones, which Omda Salah used as a guest room: after he had received a small sum of cash compensation for it, it was discovered that the room had been built by Wodehouse in 1888 as an observation post for the repulse of Nijumi's advance to Toski. The Polish Mission, who had previous knowledge that the ancient church of Faras was buried under the sand somewhere in the locality, but were not certain that it lay inside that particular hill, demolished the room. After working for days, during which their doubts increased, their shovels suddenly struck the church wall. After a few hours' work the red brick arch of the main entrance porch was revealed. It took the mission months of work to clear away the sand and reveal the church bare to the foundations. When they had revealed the east wall and their work was still in progress I paid them a visit and congratulated the silver-haired Professor Michalowski on his success, commenting how lucky they were to have struck the gate of the church. He remarked smilingly that it was not luck: 'It is experience, my boy!'

The church was huge, and was built partly of red brick, but mainly of mud bricks. The foundation was of sandstone and I was told that the church was built on the remains of an ancient temple; the site had been in constant use from the ancient pharaohs to Omda Salah of the present time. The walls were complete to the level of the roof, which was of timber beams and boards, and covered part of the church. Generally the

building was shaky and cracking in many places, and I had the impression that work on it was dangerous. The walls were all whitewashed on the inside, and richly decorated with magnificent paintings in coloured lime. Especially notable was a Madonna of such high artistic quality that it was exhibited in New York. Indeed the whole church was a gallery of beautiful paintings. Josef Gazi, the member of the Polish mission who was expert in stripping such paintings from walls, had a hard task. His method was, first, to brush the painting with a chemical solution, of which the secret was known only to him, and over which he would stick a layer of very thin cloth. He would then work continuously and with minute attention for up to ten hours at a stretch, stripping the painting from the wall like a muslin adhesive plaster. Whenever a painting was removed, another would be revealed underneath. In all, eighty-six paintings were successfully stripped off, and not one was spoilt or damaged. All were carefully packed and sent to Khartoum and Warsaw for preservation.

Besides these valuable paintings the Polish Mission recovered historical relics and important documents which will throw light on the Christian civilisation in Nubia. The bleached bones of a bishop were found in a grave inside the church near the eastern gate. The church dated from A.D. 600.

#### *(b) The Joint French—Argentinian Mission*

This combined mission carried out important excavations in the Aksha area, under the leadership of Professor J. Vercoutter and Professor Roservasser. The site was on the west bank, eleven miles north of Wadi Halfa. The excavation work began on 10 January 1960 and ended in 1962. In addition to the excavation of the temple of Ramses II already mentioned, the joint mission excavated many cemeteries, belonging to nearly all periods. In one of the cemeteries, dating back nearly 3,000 years, the bodies were found well preserved and absolutely intact, and apart from some mutilations which had taken place in ancient times, all the limbs were dehydrated, without showing the least sign of decay or decomposition. The features were quite recognisable, and even the eyeballs had not blistered and the bellies had not bulged or burst. Tattoo decoration was visible on the skin. Professor Vercoutter told me that the mutilation was the work of ancient grave robbers who cut off the limbs for the ornaments worn on them. Another interesting find of this mission was the body of a three-year-old girl, buried in a timber coffin. Most of the coffin had been consumed by white ants, but the child's body was intact, with a bead necklace and a cloth dress. Besides these bodies, many other relics, including alabaster and pottery

ornaments, were found. Some Islamic coins of unknown date were also found.

*(c) Ghana University Mission*

This mission, led by Professor P. L. Shinnie, excavated a site two miles long on the west bank of the Nile, at Dibeira West. They worked hard for three complete seasons, from October 1961 to March 1964. The area contained various ancient sites, ranging from the 'C group' period to the Middle Ages. They discovered a large Christian settlement, with churches and buildings. Ancient cemeteries were also excavated, and many relics were recovered.

The University of Ghana was the only African university that took part in saving the Nubian relics, and while regretting the absence of all the other African universities, including Khartoum, I felt very proud to see the brown faces of Ghana students working with their Professor among the white archaeologists of other nations.

*(d) The Spanish Mission*

This mission, led by Professor M. Almargo, obtained a concession to excavate a long reach extending from Argin to Abka village. They continued their work for three years. At Argin, they carried out extensive excavations of the Pharaonic cemeteries and other graveyards belonging to the 'X group' and the Meroitic age. A lot of pottery and other relics were recovered. On Kazariko Island, which was at the tail of the Second Cataract, ten miles south of Wadi Halfa, the mission worked on an ancient Christian settlement with the remains of two churches, which they discovered there. Unfortunately the paintings on the walls of these churches were all decayed and unsuitable for removal, so the mission contented themselves documenting and photographing them. Many houses were also excavated.

*(e) Colorado University Mission*

This mission obtained a licence in 1962 to carry out an archaeological survey under the guidance of Professor G. W. Hewes, on a 6-km. stretch of the river bank, including Dabarosa Island. They discovered many hitherto unknown sites, but they also excavated known sites. Their work covered 'X group', Meroitic and Christian settlements. They recovered many objects, but their most prized discovery belonged to prehistory: fossilized human and animal bones, and stone implements.

These were buried in successive layers, one above the other. They completed their work on this site in 1964, but were granted an additional licence for an archaeological survey on a very long stretch, from Gemai in the north to Dal, on the west bank of the Nile. The survey was completed in February 1966.

*(f) The British Mission*

This mission started their excavations in the ancient city of Buhen in 1957, under the able leadership of the late Professor W. B. Emery, who was considered one of the greatest of all Egyptologists. He carried out this work on behalf of the Egypt Exploration Society. His main task was to discover the defence system of this ancient city and to throw light on the layout and planning of fortifications adopted by the ancient Egyptians for the safety of that important town at the tail of the Second Cataract, which was the most critical point on the main commercial route to the south.

By 1960 all the remains of the fortifications on the west and north sides of the city were revealed, after a vast quantity of sand had been cleared away. The lower parts of the defence system were found to have been well-preserved under the sand. Although the upper part had become eroded away and could not be traced, the remaining structure told Professor Emery all he needed to know. The elaborate system was as follows.

At the base, just outside the foundation, a wide ditch 8.4 m. wide and 6.5 m. deep was cut into the base rock. The counterscarp on the outer side of the ditch was connected by a narrow covered way of bricks, which provided the only access to the fort. In the middle of the west wall, and exactly at the axis of the city, was a formidable gate, shut with a double wooden door overhung by a drawbridge which rested on rollers. Two strong walls flanked both gate and drawbridge, forming a very strong corridor not easily breached by an attacking force. The surrounding wall, of large mud bricks, was 172 m. long on each side, 9 m. high and 4.8 m. thick.

Nearly a quarter of the way up the walls, a narrow terrace was built like a balcony, forming a rampart protected on its outer side by a paved parapet overlooking the ditch. Eight equidistant rounded bastions with loopholes facing in three directions over the ditch were built on the rampart on each side, so that an attacking enemy would be exposed to a rain of arrows and lances before he could cross the ditch. At each of the four corners was a larger bastion. Over this rampart extended the main wall to the height of nearly 7 m. recessed by sixteen square bastions 2.25 x 1.9 m. each. 'The top of the wall is nowhere preserved,'

says Professor Emery,\* 'but on the basis of ancient Egyptian representations of the Middle and New Kingdoms date, we are assured that the parapet was formed of rounded mud bricks crenelations, and that the bastions and projecting corners at each end of the wall were raised to a higher level.'

Professor Emery made a detailed drawing of the whole fortification in its complete state during the Middle Kingdom. He estimated that about 15 million large bricks were used in that huge military structure.

Besides the fortifications, other important discoveries were made. The bleached bones of a horse's skeleton were found buried at the corner of one of the bastions amid cinders and ashes, under layers of sand 1.5 m. deep; there was no doubt that the horse had died in the Middle Kingdom, during the sacking of the city by the Kushites in 1675 B.C. Professor Emery's opinion, later supported by scientific evidence, was that the horse existed in Africa two centuries before the Hyksos' conquest of Egypt. This refuted the current opinion that the Hyksos introduced the horse into Africa.

Other notable finds included two hippopotamus skulls, and remains of steel and copper manufacturing. In the steel factory, I was astonished to see hundreds of mud moulds into which the smelted iron was poured. There were heaps of iron ore, probably imported from certain mountains near Akasha village, which were known for their high iron content. Among the objects found were two jars of wine with mud corks bearing the date and place where the wine was produced. Unfortunately they were empty.

Underneath the east wall a tunnel had been built from inside the city to the river; it was evidently used to bring in water supplies when the town was besieged. The excavations also revealed the police headquarters, which lay at the north-west section of the town with a staircase leading to the ramparts and to the whole fortification. The city was also provided with a proper drainage system to the river.

Professor Emery also rendered invaluable service in the dismantling of the temple of Buhen.

### *(g) The Yugoslav Mission*

The mission sent in 1960 by the Yugoslav Government successfully stripped all the paintings from the walls of an ancient church found near the village of Abdel Gadir on the west bank of the Nile. The paintings were skinned out and are now preserved and exhibited in our museum in Khartoum.

\* *Kush* No. 8 (1960).

*(h) The French Mission*

After completing their joint venture with the Argentine Mission in Akasha, the French Mission proceeded alone to excavate the site of Mirgissa on the west bank of the Nile, opposite the Second Cataract. They started work in October 1962 and finished in January 1969.

The results were most rewarding. Professor J. Vercoutter discovered the ancient fortifications of Mirgissa, which proved to be more elaborate and better preserved than those of Buhen. This fort was built by the Pharaohs of the Twelfth Dynasty, at a point between Buhen and Semna, for the protection of the commercial routes by land or river.

The layout of the defence system was the same as at Buhen, but the fort was much bigger and may have been more important. The walls were hundreds of metres long on each side, with the same ramparts and bastions as at Buhen but in larger numbers. The houses were in good condition, some with zigzag decoration round the boundary walls. In the cemeteries some decorated wooden coffins were found in a sound state, in addition to much beautiful pottery, some with hieroglyphic inscriptions, statuettes, weapons and toilet articles. The most exciting discovery was a side canal through which the boats used to be towed deep into the bank. On the muddy surface of this dry and buried canal, the footprints of the sailors who had towed the boats and of their dogs were preserved absolutely clear.

Professor Vercoutter claims that he had sufficient evidence to show that Mirgissa was the missing fort of Iken, mentioned in the papyrus list of the Nubian forts found in the Ramesseum at Luxor.

*(i) Chicago University Mission*

This mission, led by Professor K. Seele, obtained a licence in 1961 to excavate at Sarra East. Their work, which ended in 1964, led to the discovery of an ancient Pharaonic fort, around which Christian settlement later took place. The excavations revealed many churches and houses of the Christian era and many 'C group' cemeteries. One of the rare relics recovered was a book written in the old Nubian dialect, from the early Christian era.

After finishing with Sarra East, the mission was licensed to excavate an ancient fort on Durgunarti Island at the tail of the Second Cataract.

In 1966 the mission was granted a third licence, to excavate an ancient fort and some cemeteries in the locality of Semna South. The work continued, under the guidance of Professor L. Zabkar, until February 1968, and resulted in the recovery of the most beautiful pottery ever found in Nubia, as well as silver and bronze objects of the

Meroitic age and 'X group'. Hundreds of scarab seals were also found. The mission then made extensive excavations on the fort, which was found to be of elaborate structure, with a formidable defence system. In the Ramesseum papyrus from Luxor referred to above was found the name of a Nubian fort, which had been torn out, except for its last letter. Professor Zabkar believed that Semna South was the missing fort.

### *(j) The Scandinavian Mission*

This was a joint mission composed of archaeologists from Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland, led by Professor Säve-Söderbergh, and in 1960 they obtained a licence to excavate the area on the east bank of the Nile between Faras and Gemai, a stretch of 55 km. and the longest assigned to any mission.

Apart from the documentation of Dibeira Tomb, this mission discovered hundreds of new sites and rock pictures from all periods. During their third season alone, they excavated 364 sites and 1,290 graves. Thousands of objects were found, including gold masks, alabaster and copper objects, pottery and scarab seals.

One of the most interesting finds of this mission was the body of a woman, dating from the fourth century A.D., who had clearly been murdered. Her body, recovered from one of the Sarra East graves, was in very good condition. She wore a skirt of leather strips (*rahat*) tied together by a broad leather girdle, and a rough piece of cloth was rolled around her back and bosom. The posture of her body at the moment of death was the sitting position, or lying with bent knees. Her face, which was well-preserved, was really horrible. The cheeks were contracted, the mouth was open, and the eyeballs projected. The hands, which had henna-dyed nails, clutched at the sides of her face. Tied round her neck was a leather cord. The body was sent to Khartoum to be exhibited in the Museum, but unfortunately the damp weather encouraged bacterial action and caused it to decompose. The body was finally sent back to Wadi Halfa for reburial.

Another interesting find of this mission consisted of many bundles of baskets found in an ancient house near Dibeira. The baskets were made of the normal local material, palm leaves, in the style that was still in use. They were all in a usable state, and when I saw them first, I thought they belonged to the Kuftis who were working with them.

Yet a third interesting incident occurred. Near Sahaba village, there was the tomb of a famous Muslim saint, Sheikh Eweis el Ghurani, which the Nubians regularly visited at certain times for blessings. Many offerings and oblations were made to this saint, and his tomb was kept

permanently decorated with flags and coloured banners. Early in 1964, the Scandinavian Mission found an important ancient tomb, evidently underneath the shrine of Sheikh Eweis. Professor Säve-Söderbergh, fearing that the Nubians might resent any excavations being carried out at that place, approached me for permission. Accordingly I contacted Salhein and the notables of the locality, and succeeded in convincing them that since the tomb would soon be under water, they should have no objections to the important excavations, provided that the body of Sheikh Eweis was first carefully exhumed and reburied nearby. Professor Säve-Söderbergh was very pleased, and assured me that he would fulfil that obligation.

A few days later the members of the mission, accompanied by their *kufitis* and some Nubian notables, dug up the grave of Sheikh Eweis. To their great surprise, the body found there turned out to be that of a Christian bishop, wearing his cross. This incident caused a lot of excitement and laughter among the Nubians. The news was broken to me by Salhein, who wondered how they had been misled in their faith all this time into venerating a Christian bishop instead of their presumed Muslim *Faki*. It seems that the succession of religions in Nubia following each other had been responsible for the confusion.

However, the body of the bishop was carefully removed and placed in the grave duly dug for Sheikh Eweis, and the excavations on the important ancient tomb were carried out. The tomb found was hewn from rock like that of Dibeira, except that the walls contained no reliefs or writings. Four statues were found in one of the chambers but their condition was so poor that no attempt was made to move them. An inscribed stele was found indicating that the tomb belonged to a Nubian prince, Amenem-het, the brother of Djehuty-Hetep of Dibeira.

On 11 November 1962 Wadi Halfa was honoured by the visit of Crown Princess Margarethe of Denmark. Her purpose was to participate personally in saving our Nubian relics, and so she joined the Scandinavian Mission. Instead of staying in the accommodation I had arranged for her at the Nile Hotel, she preferred to live with the members of the mission in a Nubian house in Dibeira furnished with local equipment. Even the carpets arranged to line her untiled room were rejected, and she accepted the local *birish* mats, woven from palm leaves, in preference. She was given a big reception at the airport and when she arrived at Dibeira. Omda Daud Abdel Rahman, in accordance with the Nubian tradition, offered her a mat tray containing samples of dates, grilled corn, some branches of an odorous plant *reihan* and a small quantity of dry *abre*, and Nazir Salhein presented her with a necklace of *sumhuk*, all considered good omens for a happy future married life. The crowd shouted enthusiastic slogans of welcome, to



which she gave an eloquent reply of thanks. The Nubians were not only proud of her personal participation in recovering the remains of their ancestors, but also of her keenness to have a taste of the Nubian way of life during her stay. The members of the mission shared in the reception: we found them wearing *jellabias* and turbans, and so well disguised that I took them for the Saidi *kuftis*.

Princess Margarethe spent most of her thirty-four days' stay on tomb excavations, under the direction of Professor Säve-Söderbergh. It was a common sight on those days to see her carrying her implements and attending to her work. The *kuftis* and workers were very proud to be with her and were highly appreciative of her civil manners and hard work. Before her departure she breakfasted with them in a wide shelter built of wood and thatched with grass, and the menu included only



42. Crown Princess (now Queen) Margarethe of Denmark with the Swedish archaeologist Professor Söderbergh at Dibeira.

bread and beans. On 14 December she left for Khartoum, where she spent a few days before returning home.

*(k) University of California Mission*

In October 1962 a licence was granted to the Mission of the University of California to excavate in Iskot Island, some 35 km. south of Wadi Halfa. The island contained remains of the Middle Kingdom and of the Christian period. The excavations, made under the guidance of Professor Alexander Bedawi, led to the discovery of some pottery and of an ancient Nile gauge system — the device used by the ancient Egyptians for reading the rise and fall of the river. The Mission then moved to the island of Dabnarti, opposite Mirgissa. A crumbling wall on the island had led them to believe that the remains of a fort might be found there, but unfortunately they found nothing of significance.

*(l) Columbia University Mission*

This was a joint mission consisting of personnel from Columbia University and other independent scientific bodies. Their licence was restricted to prehistoric surveys along the west bank of the Nile from Faras West to the Second Cataract, outside the zones already assigned to other missions.

Their activity lasted from October 1961 to February 1965, and led to the discovery of hundreds of new sites not previously known. Thousands of stone implements and fossilised bones were found, together with other prehistoric relics which were suitable for carbon radiation analysis. The mission also undertook a geological survey of the area.

*(m) The German Democratic Republic Mission*

In 1962 this mission obtained a licence to document and register all rock documents and pictures found in the area outside the sphere of work of other missions. They started work in February 1962, ending in December 1963. They made a thorough documentation of all the hieroglyphic writings and rock pictures found engraved on hillsides, which amounted to many hundreds.

*(n) The Belgian Mission*

This mission documented all the hieroglyphic writings on the walls of the two temples at Semna. Many writings were discovered on the walls

and stelai which had escaped the notice of the scholars who had worked previously at Semna (Professors Dows Dunham, Jansen and Lepus), and led to revision of some of their findings.

Another Belgian mission carried out the photogrammetric documentation of the temples of Buhen and the two Semnas, which were used as a guide for their reconstruction in Khartoum Museum.

*(o) Brown University Mission*

This American mission undertook the documentation of all the reliefs and writings on the walls of all the temples in the affected area. The mission was led by Professor R. A. Camirer, in collaboration with the British Society for the Survey of Egyptian Monuments. The work took four years to complete, ending in 1965.

*(p) West German Mission*

This mission, led by Professor Dinkler, made excavations on the islands of Semna and Tanjur, some 100 km. south of Halfa town. In Semna they discovered a Christian fort and in Tanjur the decayed walls of churches and a Christian settlement. They completed their excavations in 1968, when they moved to the island of Kulubnarti, opposite Akasha; however, they found nothing of importance there.

*(q) The Italian Mission*

In 1966 a licence was granted to this mission under the leadership of Professor Dona Doni, to excavate the ancient church in Sonki, 110 km. south of Halfa, at the tail of the reservoir lake. The excavations took a year to complete and the results were gratifying. Many wall paintings in good condition were found in the church, like those at Faras, which had been shelled out and preserved for exhibition in Khartoum Museum. Extensive specimens of writing in Nubian dialect were found on the church walls.

Another Italian mission, led by Signora Gergini, in collaboration with the University of Pisa, worked for more than ten years excavating the outstandingly beautiful temple at Soleb, south of the affected area. The temple was thoroughly documented, and the ancient town of Soleb and its cemetery were excavated. The concession for these excavations was arranged privately, outside the Unesco programme.

*(r) Helsinki University Mission*

This mission, under Professor Gustav Donner, worked on a 15 km. stretch of the east bank of the Nile in the Gemai Murshid area. Their excavations, which lasted a year, led to the discovery of many unknown sites, and the recovery of relics from all periods.

*(s) Geneva University Mission*

The contribution of this mission covered excavations on Ukma, Akasha reach, in the far south of the affected area, under Professor C. Maystre. Their digging had extended to a range of cemeteries of all periods, and some Christian settlements and churches.

*(t) Kentucky University Mission*

This mission, led by Dr. Adams, the Unesco expert who helped the Department of Archaeology during its preparatory work, worked on the island of Kulubnarti from 1969 to 1970. They found an ancient church with paintings in good condition, which they stripped and sent to Rome for preservation, before being exhibited in the Khartoum Museum.

While all this activity was going on, Sayed Najm el Din was also kept busy packing up all the relics exhibited in the small museum of Wadi Halfa. Before despatching them he did not forget to pay a visit to my house and collect two column capitals dating from the Christian age, which had been placed on either side of the garden steps by one of the British governors. I also suggested to him that the two Krupp cannons placed at the gate of my house should be sent with his consignment, but he apologetically declined, saying that these were not on his list. Later we despatched them to Khartoum to be displayed at the Presidential Palace.

There is no doubt that after the Agreement the fate of Nubia, with all its relics and monuments, aroused world-wide interest. The novel schemes proposed for saving the two temples at Abu Simbel, whether to jack them up to the level of the reservoir lake, or leave them in their place and build a dyke around them so that one could go down and see them below the water level, or whether to saw them into pieces and re-erect them nearby on high ground, stimulated wide curiosity and created a deep interest in these unique monuments. The first scheme alone would cost £S 24 million, a fantastic figure, which one might have thought sufficient to restore life to the mummies of the Pharaohs

and make them build similar new temples. These schemes, together with the controversial argument over whether the two temples were really worth all this cost, attracted thousands of tourists from many countries to come and see these wonders which had given rise to such a great engineering puzzle.

No wonder, then, that from the time when the Egyptians declared their intention of building the High Dam, Nubia had been flooded with tourists. Since the Egyptians had no regular river service from Aswan to Abu Simbel, and no hotel accommodation at the site of the temples, the tourists used to take our steamers all the way up to Wadi Halfa, with a long stop at Abu Simbel to see the wonders of Ramses II.

Every steamer used to bring hundreds of tourists to spend two days at Wadi Halfa before returning to Aswan. They filled the hotel, its annexes and all the berths of the old steamer *Sudan*, which was moored alongside the Hotel garden. Some tourists would take the Nubian sailing boats and cross the river to the ancient remains at Buhen. Others would go by taxi to the village of Abka for a view of the Second Cataract. Among the well-known overseas visitors to Halfa about this time were Marshal Tito, the Duke of Edinburgh and other members of the British royal family, Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, Somerset Maugham, and the Speaker of the Italian Senate.



APPENDIX

THE WADI HALFA  
POPULATION SURVEY

# I/A. HALFA TOWN

## Residents by Sex and Age Group – Major Division and Whole Town

Major Division	Sex	Years of Age														
		All Ages	Under 1	1	2	3	4	5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	over 60
WHOLE AREA	both sexes	11,056	240	378	461	465	403	347	1,730	1,319	1,000	1,735	1,273	842	470	392
	males	5,591	112	201	225	233	185	161	895	708	431	795	693	474	265	213
	females	5,465	128	177	236	232	218	186	835	611	569	940	580	369	205	179
Dabarosa	both sexes	2,003	48	54	75	76	72	69	305	249	200	290	207	153	105	100
	males	977	17	35	30	41	32	32	165	131	84	139	92	88	49	42
	females	1,026	31	19	45	35	40	37	140	188	116	151	115	65	56	58
El Jebel	both sexes	947	13	22	32	34	27	27	135	104	68	177	130	121	52	65
	males	492	10	11	19	20	15	15	76	6	37	43	62	60	30	31
	females	455	3	11	13	14	12	12	59	41	31	74	68	61	22	34
Arkawit	both sexes	1,532	38	55	59	66	52	40	256	200	133	237	172	109	56	59
	males	757	21	27	28	30	18	23	122	102	56	113	96	59	31	32
	females	775	17	28	31	36	34	17	134	98	77	124	76	50	25	27



## Residents by Sex and Age Group – Major Division and Whole Town

Major Division	Sex	Years of Age													over 60	
		All ages	Under 1	1	2	3	4	5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-30	31-40	41-50		51-60
El Madina	both sexes	1,542	32	51	65	62	64	57	260	200	131	237	192	96	65	30
	males	775	15	27	31	30	32	20	132	103	56	99	112	57	40	21
	females	767	17	24	34	32	32	37	128	97	75	138	80	39	25	9
Tippetts	both sexes	2,880	60	122	124	145	106	87	436	310	268	502	344	211	100	65
	males	1,468	30	67	65	73	50	39	209	164	111	231	200	125	64	40
	females	1,412	30	55	59	72	56	48	227	146	157	271	144	86	36	25
El Basalwa	both sexes	2,152	49	74	106	82	82	67	338	256	200	352	228	153	92	73
	males	1,121	19	34	52	39	38	32	191	145	87	170	131	85	51	47
	females	1,031	30	40	54	43	44	35	147	111	113	182	97	68	41	26

# I/B. RURAL AREA

## Residents by Sex and Age Group -- Omodia and Whole Area

Omodia	Sex	Years of Age														
		All ages	Under 1	1	2	3	4	5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	Over 60
WHOLE AREA	both sexes	27422	569	1037	1080	1189	982	979	4372	2893	2109	3660	2874	2363	1511	1804
	males	11860	279	521	557	569	489	478	2263	1470	699	1104	1054	933	687	757
	females	15562	290	516	523	620	493	501	2109	1423	1410	2556	1820	1430	824	1047
Faras West	both sexes	655	4	18	16	22	20	23	83	58	38	92	77	75	49	80
	males	253	2	9	5	7	9	10	43	26	13	32	35	23	14	25
	females	402	2	9	11	15	11	13	40	32	25	60	42	52	35	55
Faras East	both sexes	549	14	22	15	22	17	22	78	45	45	92	66	49	32	30
	males	232	5	10	6	7	8	9	50	22	17	20	31	22	13	12
	females	317	9	12	9	15	9	13	28	23	28	72	35	27	19	18
Sarraf East	both sexes	784	9	40	17	38	23	42	107	64	53	89	88	86	53	75
	males	292	5	18	9	25	11	21	55	30	12	18	25	27	15	21
	females	492	4	22	8	13	12	21	52	34	41	71	63	59	38	54
Sarraf West	both sexes	754	15	14	17	40	19	23	113	67	59	84	91	77	54	81
	males	267	7	6	8	18	10	7	64	35	9	14	16	24	18	31
	females	487	8	8	9	22	9	16	49	32	50	70	75	53	36	50

# I/B. RURAL AREA Cont.

## Residents by Sex and Age Group – Omodia and Whole Area

Omodia	Sex	Years of Age														
		All ages	Under 1	1	2	3	4	5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	Over 60
Dibeira	both sexes	3775	83	122	152	145	116	129	595	434	276	455	397	342	265	264
	males	1695	43	70	78	82	57	74	314	230	106	127	138	135	130	111
	females	2080	40	52	74	63	59	55	281	204	170	328	259	207	135	153
Ashkeit	both sexes	1860	35	65	74	64	61	60	300	214	142	227	187	142	128	161
	males	786	19	36	38	28	30	32	156	107	53	55	67	55	46	64
	females	1074	16	29	36	36	31	28	144	107	89	172	120	87	82	97
Argin	both sexes	2256	55	81	70	81	67	61	328	276	167	282	251	193	152	192
	males	860	23	34	33	41	30	23	153	137	42	80	86	53	62	63
	females	1396	32	47	37	40	37	38	175	139	125	202	165	140	90	129
Dabarosa	both sexes	828	23	27	39	30	37	31	142	94	67	106	79	70	36	47
	males	431	12	16	21	16	23	18	77	49	29	43	36	34	25	32
	females	397	11	11	18	14	14	13	65	45	38	63	43	36	11	15
Degheim	both sexes	6706	147	233	263	279	239	208	1010	745	577	934	679	615	371	406
	males	2980	73	121	140	119	119	101	503	392	230	304	263	257	166	192
	females	3726	74	112	123	160	120	107	507	353	347	630	416	358	205	214

I/B. RURAL AREA Cont.

Residents by Sex and Age Group – Omodia and Whole Area

Omodia	Sex	Years of Age													Over 60
		All ages	Under 1	1	2	3	4	5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60
Gemai	both sexes	2580	58	117	119	130	95	103	455	272	193	343	240	195	77
	males	1103	25	59	55	63	43	55	245	158	53	74	81	79	45
	females	1477	33	58	64	67	52	48	210	114	140	269	159	116	32
Saras	both sexes	2518	54	117	133	118	109	93	441	251	199	378	252	182	94
	males	1188	32	63	70	56	62	47	221	124	57	133	124	86	59
	females	1330	22	54	63	62	47	46	220	127	142	245	128	96	35
Dawashat	both sexes	1646	44	82	71	95	69	79	292	146	127	260	175	108	56
	males	785	15	37	46	46	29	34	160	65	41	122	76	59	32
	females	861	29	45	25	49	40	45	132	81	86	138	99	49	24
Akasha	both sexes	1520	14	59	64	78	79	66	259	116	99	193	177	138	82
	males	564	11	23	34	33	42	29	129	41	15	40	46	52	30
	females	956	3	36	30	45	37	37	130	75	84	153	131	86	52
Kosha	both sexes	991	14	40	30	47	31	39	169	111	67	125	115	91	62
	males	424	7	19	14	28	16	18	93	54	22	42	30	27	32
	females	567	7	21	16	19	15	21	76	57	45	83	85	64	30

## II. RURAL AREA

*Residents Aged 11 and Over Classified by Marital Status, Sex and Age Group*  
*Whole Area*

Marital Status	No. of persons	Age group sex	Years of age						
			11-15	16-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	Over 60
SINGLE	2611	Males	1470	669	366	56	27	11	12
	1912	Females	1295	494	90	16	9	4	4
MARRIED	3899	Males	—	29	713	976	876	644	661
	6111	Females	121	868	2282	1495	916	306	123
DIVORCED	85	Males	—	1	21	17	17	15	14
	381	Females	6	40	118	87	70	33	29
WIDOWED	109	Males	—	—	4	5	13	17	70
	2106	Females	1	8	68	222	435	481	891
Total	6704	Males	1470	699	1104	1054	933	687	757
	10510	Females	1423	1410	2556	1820	1430	824	1047

## III. HALFA TOWN

*Residents Age 16 and Over Classified by Sector.  
Nationality and Sex – Whole Town*

Sector	Nationality							
	Sudanese by birth		Sudanese by grant		Foreigner		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Agriculture	48	—	22	—	110	2	180	2
Commerce	270	23	80	—	114	21	464	44
Govt. Transport	167	—	19	—	38	—	224	—
Private Transport	70	—	69	—	186	—	325	—
Industry	242	24	28	—	69	7	339	31
Building	114	2	42	—	134	—	290	2
Service	61	25	12	—	49	1	122	26
Miscellaneous	6	—	2	1	4	—	12	1
Government	571	39	29	1	55	—	655	40
Nil	176	1677	24	125	60	894	260	2696
Total	1725	1790	327	127	819	925	2871	2843

## IV. RURAL AREA

*Heads of House by Economic Sector and Sex – Whole Area*

Economic Sector	Heads of Houses		
	Males	Females	Total
Agriculture	2445	956	3104
Commerce	210	6	216
Govt. Transport	261	—	261
Private Transport	77	—	77
Industry	87	8	95
Building	85	—	85
Services	51	7	58
Miscellaneous	28	8	36
Government	320	14	334
Nil	178	1831	2009
All Sectors	3742	2533	6275

## V. RURAL AREA

*Houses Classified by Number of Income Earners and Whether  
Receiving Income from Outside – Whole Area*

Income earners per household	No. of households		
	Receiving income from outside	Not receiving income from outside	Total
0	1460	287	1747
1	860	2213	3073
2	282	770	1052
3	64	214	278
4	11	76	87
5	8	22	30
6	—	5	5
7	—	1	1
8	—	1	1
12	—	1	1
All households	2685	3590	6275

## VI. RURAL AREA

*Number of Residents Classified by Sex – Omodia and Sheikhship  
and Whole Area*

Omodia Sheikhship	No. of Persons					
	Omodia			Sheikhship		
Name	Both Sexes	Males	Females	Both sexes	Males	Females
WHOLE AREA	27422	11860	15562	27422	11860	15562
FARAS WEST	655	253	402			
Faras North West				298	112	186
Faras South West				357	141	216
FARAS EAST	549	232	317			
Faras East				549	232	317

VI. RURAL AREA *Cont.*

*Number of Residents Classified by Sex – Omodia and Sheikhship  
and Whole Area*

<i>Omodia Sheikhship</i>	<i>No. of Persons</i>					
	<i>Omodia</i>			<i>Sheikhship</i>		
<i>Name</i>	<i>Both Sexes</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Both Sexes</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
SARRA EAST	784	292	492			
<i>Sarra East (1st)</i>				375	134	241
<i>Sarra East (2nd)</i>				409	158	251
SARRA WEST	754	267	487			
<i>Sarra North West</i>				383	146	237
<i>Sarra South West</i>				371	121	250
DIBEIRA	3755	1695	2080			
<i>Hajir East</i>				1131	502	629
<i>Dibeira Central</i>				1286	595	691
<i>Dibeira South</i>				733	327	406
<i>Hasa South</i>				625	271	354
ASHKEIT	1860	786	1074			
<i>Ashkeit North</i>				965	403	562
<i>Ashkeit South</i>				895	383	512
ARGIN	2256	860	1396			
<i>Argin North</i>				994	366	628
<i>Argin South</i>				1262	494	768
DABAROSA	828	431	397			
<i>Dabarosa</i>				828	431	397
DEGHEIM	6706	2980	3726			
<i>Angash</i>				1442	685	787
<i>Degheim North</i>				3385	1522	1863
<i>Degheim South</i>				1879	803	1076
GEMAI	2580	1103	1477			
<i>Kokki Islands</i>				433	196	237
<i>Amka</i>				628	258	370
<i>Gemai East</i>				573	244	329
<i>Gemai West</i>				263	106	157
<i>Murshid East</i>				560	242	318
<i>Murshid West</i>				123	57	66



## VI. RURAL AREA Cont.

*Number of Residents Classified by Sex – Omodia and Sheikhship  
and Whole Area*

<i>Omodia Sheikhship</i>	<i>No. of Persons</i>					
	<i>Omodia</i>			<i>Sheikhship</i>		
<i>Name</i>	<i>Both Sexes</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Both Sexes</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
<b>SARAS</b>	2518	1188	1330			
<i>Saras</i>				1318	629	689
<i>Semna</i>				627	293	334
<i>Atiri</i>				573	266	307
<b>DAWASHAT</b>	1646	785	861			
<i>Dawashat</i>				638	301	337
<i>Umbikol</i>				439	225	214
<i>Malik El Basir</i>				569	259	310
<b>AKASHA</b>	1520	564	956			
<i>Sunki</i>				181	47	134
<i>Ukma</i>				497	181	316
<i>Akasha</i>				286	126	160
<i>Kulb</i>				556	210	346
<b>KHOSHA</b>	991	424	567			
<i>Dal</i>				518	232	286
<i>Sarkamatto</i>				373	192	281

## VII. HALFA TOWN

*Numbers of Residents and Absentees*  
*Major Division and Whole Town*

<i>Major Division</i>	<i>No. of Residents</i>	<i>No. of Absentees</i>
Whole Town	11,059	365
Dabarosa	2,003	245
El Jebel	947	1
Arkawit	1,532	44
El Madina	1,542	41
Toppetts	2,880	23
El Basalwa	2,152	11

## VIII. RURAL AREA

*Number of Residents and Number of Absentees*  
*Omodia and Whole Area*

<i>Omodia</i>	<i>No. of Residents</i>	<i>No. of Absentees</i>
Whole Area	27,422	14,431
Faras West	655	644
Faras East	549	259
Saras East	784	866
Saras West	754	612
Dibeira	3,755	1,901
Ashkeit	1,860	1,201
Argin	2,256	2,043
Dabarosa	828	87
Degheim	6,706	3,568
Gemai	2,580	1,254
Saras	2,518	548
Dawashat	1,646	162
Akasha	1,520	772
Kosha	991	514

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